AFTER THE BATTLE

THE BATTLE FOR LEROS

9 770306 154066 12

£3.00 US $6.95

Number 90

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NUMBER 90

Edited by Winston G. Ramsey
European Editor: Karel Margry
Published by Battle of Britain Prints International Ltd.,
Church House, Church Street,
London E15 3JA, England
Telephone: 0181-534 8833
Fax: 0181-555 7567
Printed in Great Britain by Plaistow Press Ltd., London E15 3JA

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After the Battle is published quarterly on the 15th of February, May, August and November.

United Kingdom Newsagent Distribution:
Seymour Press Ltd., Windsor House, 1270 London Road, Norbury, London SW16 4DH.
Telephone: 0181-679 1899

United States Distribution and Subscriptions:
RZM Imports, PO Box 995, Southbury, CT, 06488
Telephone: 1-203-264-0774

Canadian Distribution and Subscriptions:
Vanwell Publishing Ltd., 1 Northrup Crescent, St. Catharines, Ontario L2M 6P5.
Telephone: (905) 937 3100 Fax: (905) 937 1760

Australian Subscriptions and Back Issues:
Technical Book and Magazine Company, Pty, Ltd., 289-299 Swanston Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000.
Telephone: 663 3951

New Zealand Distribution:
South Pacific Books (Imports) Ltd., 6 King Street, Grey Lynn, Auckland 2. Telephone: 762-142

Italian Distribution:
Tuttostoria, Casella Postale 395, 1-43100 Parma.
Telephone: 0521 290 387, Telex 532274 EDIALB I

Dutch Language Edition:
Quo Vadis, Postbus 3121, 3760 DC Soest.
Telephone: 035 6018641

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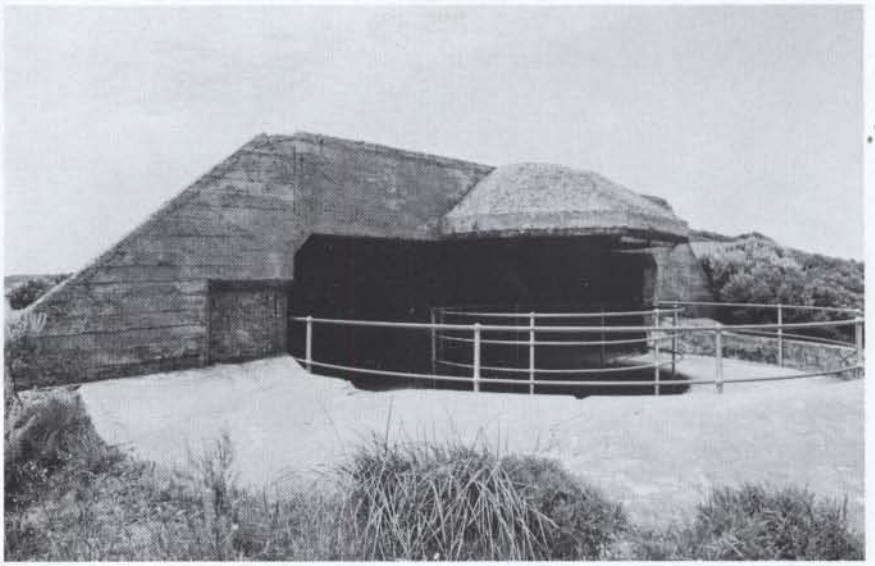
Front Cover: The command bunker of Battery Lago on Mount Appetici — a key objective during the German operation against Leros in November 1943. (Peter Schenk)

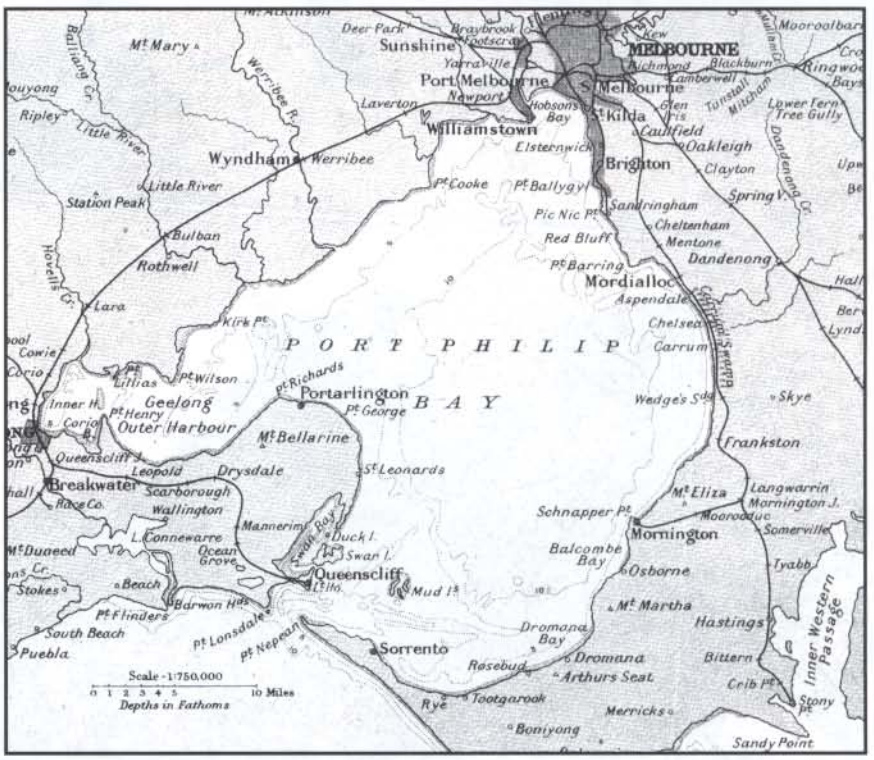
Centre Pages: All the Italian battery positions in the Dodecanese were demilitarised by the British occupying forces after the war prior to the transfer of sovereignty over the islands to Greece. This is P.L. 906 on Mount Muplogurna. (Peter Schenk)

Back Cover: The grave of 2nd Lieutenant Robert J. Cobner at the American Military Cemetery near Cambridge. He was shot by Private David Cobb in December 1943. Cobb was executed in January 1944 and his body returned to his home town of Dothan, Alabama, in 1949.

Photo Credits: IWM – Imperial War Museum, London.



With the passage of 80 years since the beginning of the First World War, and having recently celebrated 50 years from the end of the Second, perhaps this is an opportune moment to look back to a little known, yet amazing, coincidence which took place in Australia at the beginning of both world wars. In *After the Battle* No. 46, we ran an article on the preservation of the artillery piece which fired the first British shot of the 'war to end all wars' on August 5, 1914. Then in issue 65, we described the events which led up to the firing of the opening shots of the Second World War at 4.47 a.m. on September 1, 1939 at Danzig in Poland. Now, David Green tells the story of how the 6-inch gun which once occupied this empty emplacement guarding the approach to Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay had the unique honour of firing the first Allied shots of *both* world wars!



During the Second World War, Port Phillip Bay was principally protected by three batteries of 6-inch Mk VII guns which replaced the earlier breach and muzzle weapons which had looked over the bay since the mid-19th century. Initially, there were seven Mk VII guns at the Heads. One of the three 6-inch guns at Fort Queenscliff was removed in January 1942 and the two remaining guns were transferred to Point Lonsdale four months later. Across the 'Rip' from Lonsdale, Fort Pearce at Point Nepean was built in 1910. The battery consisted of observation post and underground magazines and was equipped with two 6-inch Mk VII guns. Considered vulnerable to aerial attack, the guns, numbered 'L.1' and 'L.2', were removed in June 1942. In 1910, two 6-inch Mk VII guns were installed at Fort Nepean, both emplaced in sites formerly occupied by 9.2-inch disappearing guns. Following the destruction of open gun emplacements by Japanese dive bombers at Rabaul, concrete hoods were constructed over the Fort Nepean guns in 1942. The distinction of having fired the first shots belongs to the 6-inch gun 'F.1' mounted on carriage number A2606.

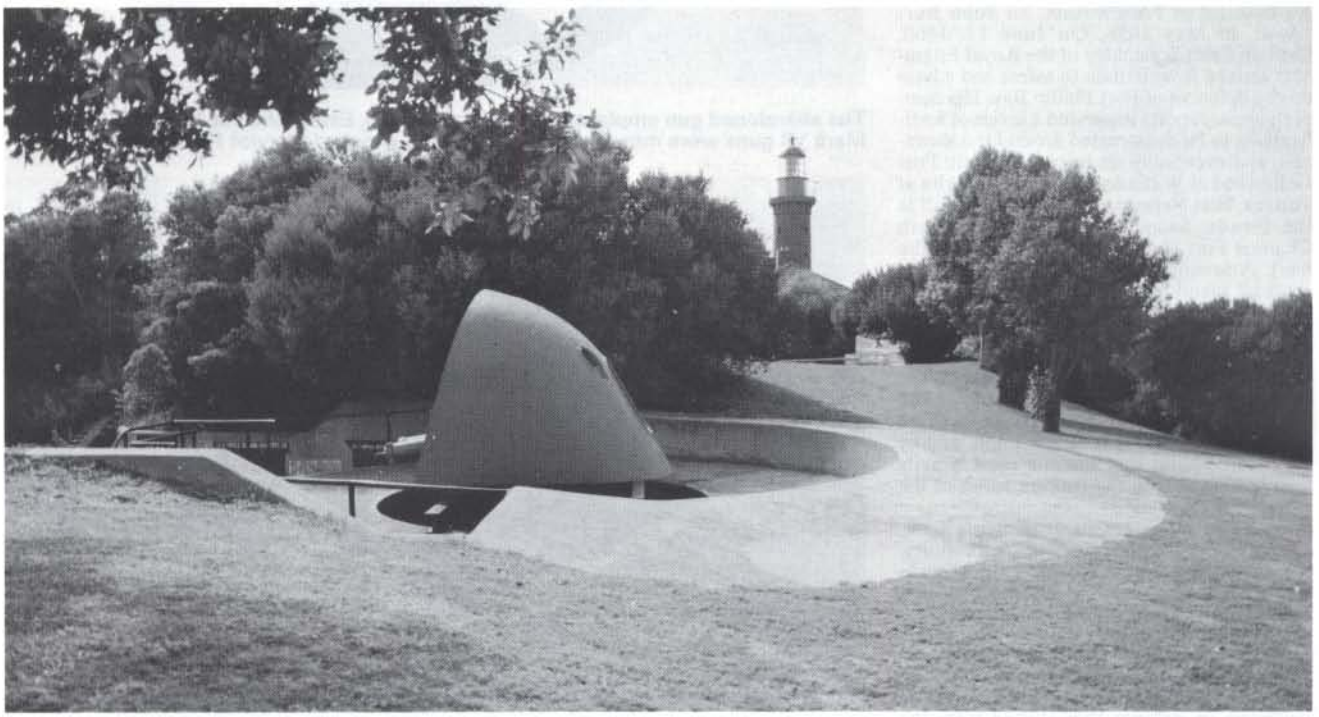
THE FIRST ALLIED SHOTS

By David M. Green

As unlikely as it seems, the historic first shots of both world wars were fired many thousands of miles from the battlefields of Europe. The distinction belongs to Fort Nepean, a lonely Australian outpost that once guarded the entrance to Port Phillip Bay.

When England declared war against Germany at 11 p.m., August 4, 1914, a German steamer, on the other side of the world, was attempting to leave Australian waters. This would-be escape was the catalyst for the initial Allied shot of the First World War.

By a remarkable coincidence, a similar incident 25 years later involved the same gun firing the first Allied shot of the Second World War.



The 6-inch Mk VII 'B.2' gun at Fort Queenscliff in 1913. In 1908, this weapon became the standard armament of the Port Phillip Bay defences and, with a full charge of 123lbs of cordite, the guns could fire 100lb shells over 15,000 yards. The guns remained in service until the closure of the Royal Australian Artillery Command coastal defence network in 1946.

Looking across the 'Rip.' Picture taken at Point Nepean looking over to the Point Lonsdale lighthouse. Port Phillip Bay was first sighted on January 5, 1802, during the third voyage of the *Lady Nelson* under the command of Lieutenant John Murray.

A SOUTHERN GIBRALTAR

Situated in south-eastern Australia, Port Phillip Bay is one of the world's great harbours. A massive body of water, it encompasses an area of 1900 square kilometres of water within 225 kilometres of shoreline. The entrance into the bay is through a narrow stretch of treacherous water known as the 'Rip', bounded by Points Lonsdale and Nepean: the Heads. This natural harbour provided the ideal location for the settlement which grew to become Melbourne. Towards the end of the 19th century, many colonists in the increasingly prosperous town became fearful of invasion as the European situation became more and more volatile. Both Russia and France were seen as potential enemies and the threat was perceived of a belligerent naval force sailing into Port Phillip Bay.

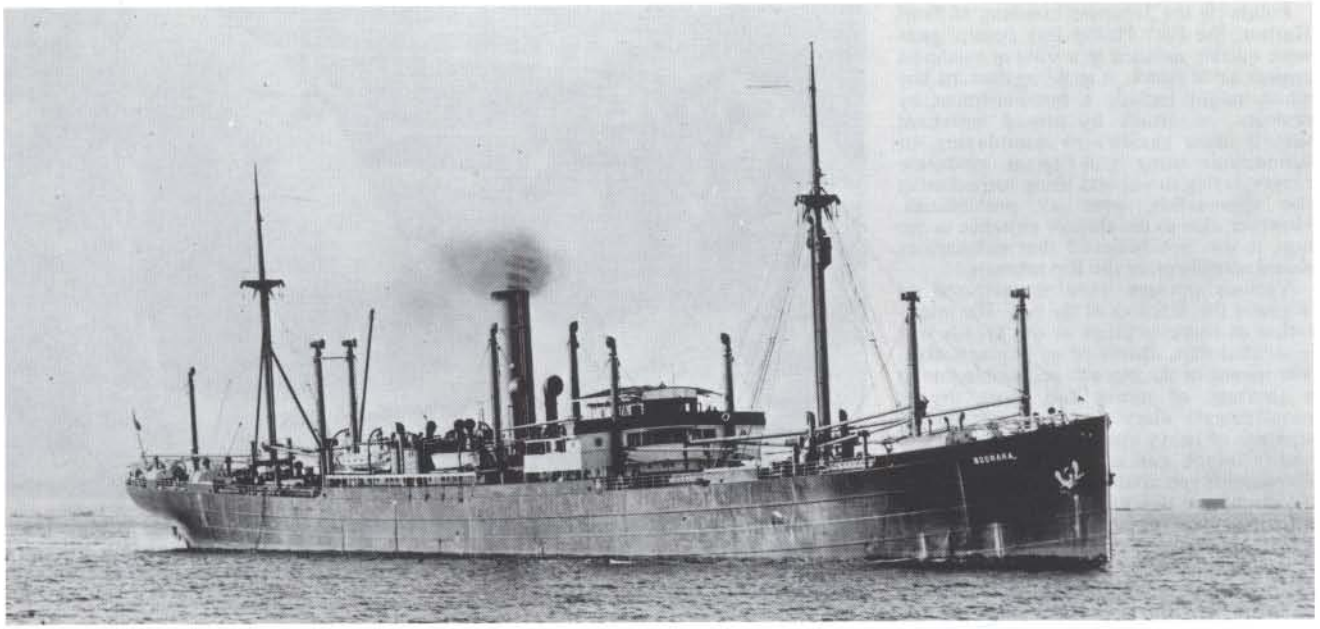
Fortification of the Heads was first suggested by the Imperial Government's Inspector-General of Fortification, Sir John Burgoyne, in May 1858. On June 13, 1860, Captain Peter Scratchley of the Royal Engineers arrived from Britain to assess and advise on the defences of Port Phillip Bay. His comprehensive reports suggested a series of fortifications to be constructed around the shoreline, and eventually six forts were built: Fort Gellibrand at Williamstown, Fort Franklin at Portsea, Fort Nepean and Fort Queenscliff at the Heads, Swan Island Fort and South Channel Fort (on a man-made island in the bay). A seventh, Pope's Eye Fort, another artificial island fortress, was begun but never completed.

By 1887, the military force guarding the bay consisted of 5,792 men with a further 590 Naval personnel, manning 16 vessels, the total male population of Melbourne at the time being 600,000. The Heads became known as the 'Gibraltar of the South' and by 1891 Port Phillip Bay was the most heavily fortified harbour in the Empire south of the equator.

With the advances in armaments technology at the beginning of the 20th century, the early breech and muzzle-loading guns emplaced around the bay became obsolete. Having only limited range, these guns had been emplaced to ensure a field of fire across the bay, while the newer and more powerful 6-inch Mk VII guns could attack enemy shipping long before it entered the harbour. The emphasis on defence thus shifted from the fortresses, minefields and naval vessels inside the bay to the installations situated on the Heads.

The abandoned gun emplacements of Fort Pearce. Established in 1910, the two 6-inch Mark VII guns were moved nearby to the less exposed Cheviot Hill in 1942.

The 8-inch breech-loading 'disappearing gun' displayed at Fort Queenscliff today. The gun was manufactured by the Elswick Ordnance Company in 1885 and recovered from South Channel Fort in 1980.



The *Boorara,* formerly the Norddeutscher-Lloyd steamer *Pfalz,* built in 1913 in Vegesack in Germany.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

On Friday, July 31, 1914, the 6,500-ton Norddeutscher-Lloyd steamer *Pfalz*, of Bremen, berthed at No. 2 Victoria Dock, Melbourne. Captain W. Kuhiken was on his first voyage in command and due to sail for Sydney on Tuesday, August 4. As the likelihood of war in Europe increased, the young captain extended his stay in port so an additional 200 tons of coal could be taken on which would enable his ship to reach the safety of South American waters.

By 7.45 a.m. on the morning of August 5, the *Pfalz* had slipped her moorings. At the helm was Captain M. Robinson of the Port Phillip Pilot Service. Clearing the congested port, the German steamer sailed for the Heads at reduced speed in order to conserve coal. Reaching Portsea at approximately 10 a.m., the vessel was intercepted by the Naval Examination vessel *Alvina*. Following inspection by Examination Service officers, who were unaware of the outbreak of hostilities, the *Pfalz* was cleared and allowed to proceed. Sensing success, a jubilant Captain Kuhiken was joined on the bridge by previously unseen German consular officials.

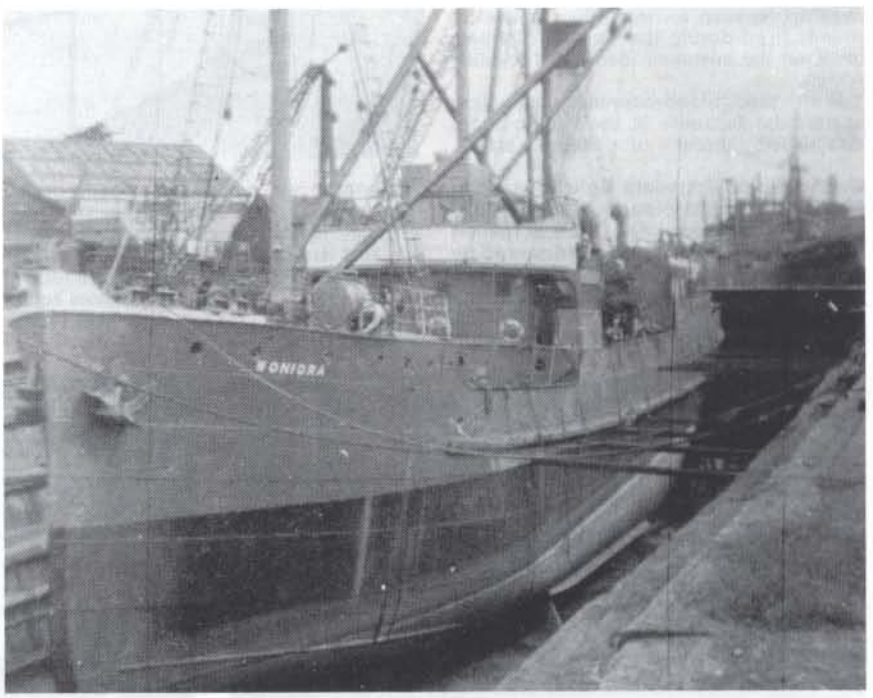
The declaration of war in Europe was received by the Australian Governor-General at 12.30 p.m. (Eastern Australian Time) on August 5, and passed to the Fort Nepean fire commander, Lieutenant Morris, at 12.45 p.m. A flag was immediately hoisted calling for the *Pfalz* to stop. Concentrating on the passage through the Heads, the pilot was unaware of the order to 'heave to or be sunk'. It was the report of a 6-inch gun and the splash of shell close to the ship which brought his attention to the signal flying at the fort. Quickly, he telegraphed 'Full Speed Astern'. A brief struggle then erupted on the bridge between Robinson and Kuhiken over control of the engine room telegraph. Convincing the unfortunate German captain that the next shot fired would strike his vessel amidships, he relented and Robinson resumed control.

Local Australian histories reveal that an examination of the vessel revealed warlike stores to the value of £90,000 and that the deck-plates had been drilled to accommodate the 4-inch guns found in the hold. The *Pfalz*, it would seem, was intended to become a merchant shipping raider. However, there are no official records of German merchantmen carrying unmounted guns in pre-war readiness for the possible outbreak of hostilities. Controversy exists over the supposed discovery of secret German codes which dramatically influenced the Battle of the Falkland Islands, although the official Australian history states that the codes were taken on August 11, 1914, from the German liner *Hobart*.

Following a refit at Williamstown dockyard, the *Pfalz* was commissioned into the Australian Navy as the troopship *Boorara*. Leaving Sydney in December 1914 with 114 soldiers and 387 horses, she joined the second convoy at Western Australia before sailing to Egypt. During an eventful period of wartime service, the *Boorara* survived a major collision and several torpedo hits, returning home with Australian troops in 1919.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By an incredible coincidence, the same 6-inch gun in Fort Nepean was to fire the first Allied shot of the Second World War. At 9.15 p.m. (Eastern Australian Time) on September 3, 1939, the Prime Minister of Australia, Robert G. Menzies, announced Britain's declaration of war. Less than five hours later — at 1.50 a.m. the next morning — a small coaster bound from Stanley in Tasmania entered Port Phillip Bay. The small 823-ton *Woniora* acknowledged its identity but continued without stopping for inspection by the Naval Examination vessel *Akuna*. However, a 100lb projectile fired across the bows of the ship hurriedly forced the captain to heave to.



The *Woniora* pictured in a Melbourne dry dock in January 1958. This small 823-ton coaster was built in Scotland by Hall Russell in 1913. The first Allied shot of the Second World War was fired over the bows of this ship within hours of the commencement of hostilities to prevent the possible scuttling of an enemy ship in the entrance to the bay. The captain of the vessel explained to a newspaper of the time 'that he had given the name of the ship and thought he could enter without heaving to'. The paper added: 'He is not likely to repeat the mistake!'

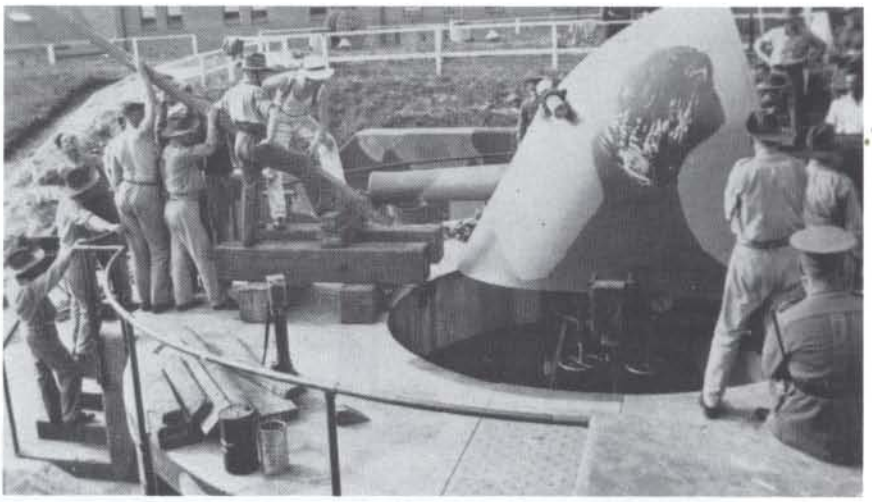
Following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Port Phillip Bay coastal guns were quickly manned in a state of readiness against naval attack. A strike against the bay which might include a bombardment by cruisers, an attack by armed merchant vessels using gun-fire or mine-laying, or submarines using gun-fire at moderate ranges, laying mines and firing torpedoes in the approaches, were all possibilities. However, due to the shallow entrance to the bay, it was not believed that submarines would actually enter the Rip submerged.

Various options were investigated to augment the defences of the bay. The installation of torpedo tubes at the Heads was evaluated then dismissed as impracticable. The mining of the bay was impossible due to a shortage of mines and more urgent requirements elsewhere in Australia. A shortage of heavy armament meant that the empty 6-inch gun emplacements at Fort Queenscliff received dummy wooden guns. To illuminate possible nocturnal intruders into the bay, detection equipment was installed between Points Lonsdale and Nepean. Plans were issued for a scorched-earth policy of the Melbourne port facilities and the scuttling of block-ships in the channels in the event of invasion. The weakness of the Port Phillip defensive capabilities was noted by a cynical military analyst of the time who wrote in January 1942: 'I see nothing to prevent the three batteries of 6-inch guns being put out of action by three squadrons of dive-bombers operating from carriers assisted by fire from capital ships, in which case the Japanese expeditionary force would have a free run to Port Melbourne where they should arrive in time for breakfast!'

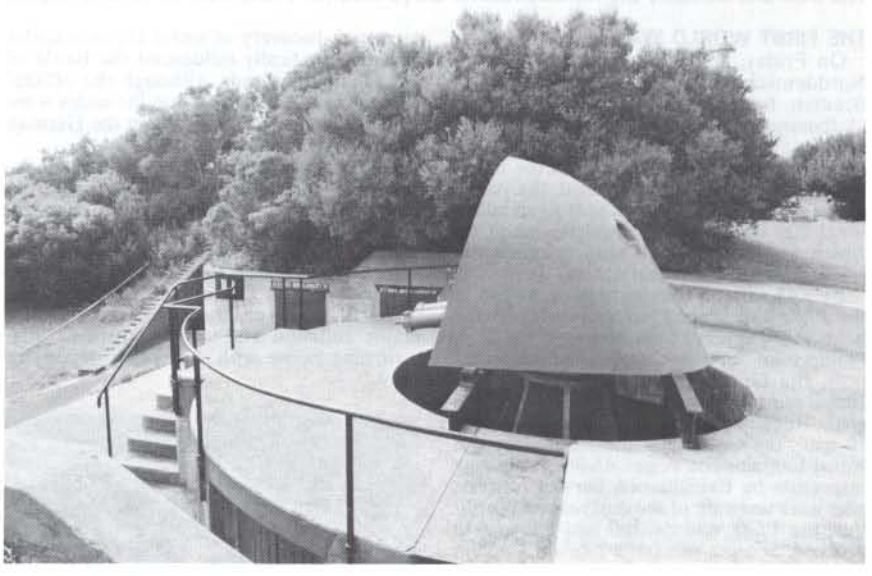
As it happened, the closest the enemy came to Port Phillip Bay during the war was a daring daylight reconnaissance flight by a Japanese Yokosuka E14Y (Glen) floatplane, launched from the submarine *I-25* on February 26, 1942. Earlier, in October 1940, the German auxiliary minelayer *Passat* had laid mines in Bass Strait, close to the narrow entrance to the bay. The official war diary of the Fort Nepean records other 'heave to' rounds fired during the war, all of which involved the mistaken identity of friendly vessels.

With the 'island-hopping' campaigns against the Japanese in the Pacific and a diminished threat of enemy attack, Melbourne was declared an open port on September 12, 1944. Following the surrender of Japan, the defensive network guarding the bay that had never challenged an attack was stood down. For a time, Fort Nepean formed part of an Army Officer Cadet School before closing and reopening to the public in 1988 as a National Park.

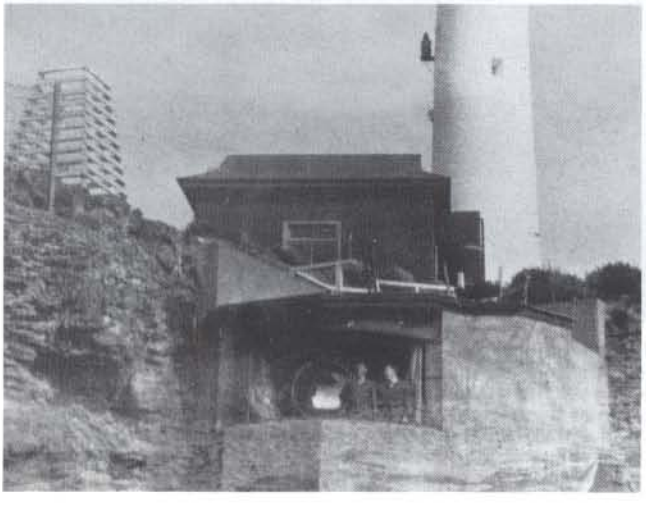
Fort Queenscliff became an Army Staff College in 1946 and continues in this rôle today. Fortunately, the historical value of these two little-known 'first-shot' incidents has since been recognised, and Fort Nepean's two famous gun barrels are now displayed by the bay they once protected, half a world away from where the two world wars first began.

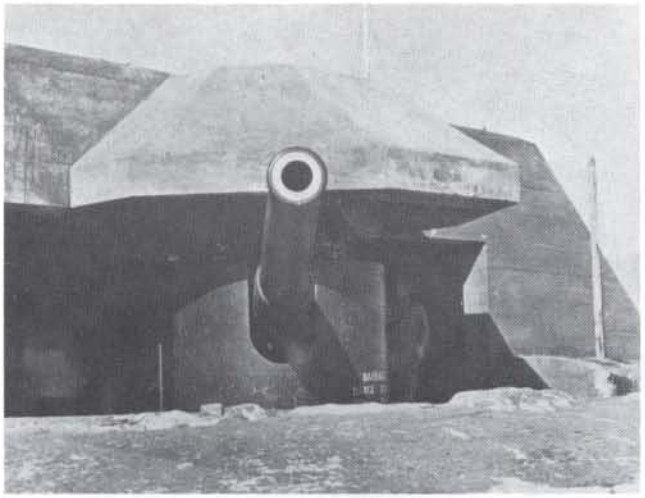


Dismantling the 'B.2' 6-inch Mark VII gun at Fort Queenscliff in 1940. In May 1943, two of the 6-inch guns from Queenscliff were remounted at Point Lonsdale, the third gun being sent north to Newcastle, north of Sydney; such was the shortage of available long-range guns at the time.

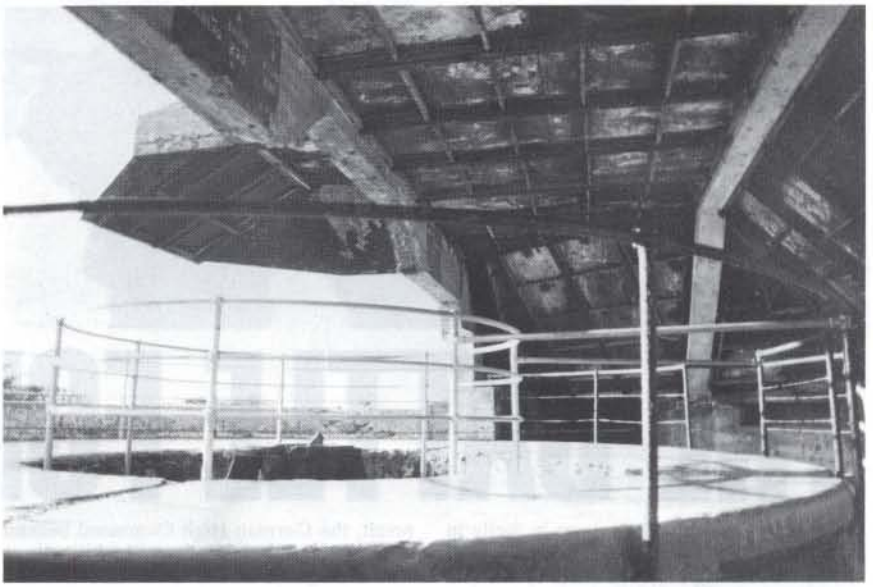


Below: **Point Lonsdale lighthouse and No. 2 Searchlight pictured *(left)* in 1933 and *(right)* 60 years later. The 230 million candle-power light could be triggered by the breaking of an infra-red beam projected from Lonsdale to Nepean but the system proved innefective in rain or fog and was sometimes set off by a seagull!**





Above: **One of the 6-inch Mark VII emplacements at Fort Nepean in 1943. The Nepean guns were originally mounted on a central pivot with a 360 degree traverse.** *Right:* **A degree of uncertainty exists over which is the precise 'F.1' Mk VII gun emplacement at Fort Nepean from where the first shot was fired, but it is most likely this one, now known as Emplacement No. 6.** *Below:* **Probably the two most famous gun barrels in the world today. On the left is barrel No. 1489 which fired the first shell of World War I, and on the right, barrel No. 1317 which fired the first Allied shot of World War II. Both barrels were mounted on the same gun carriage, No. A2606. After the war, the original log book of the barrels was misplaced. At the time, the importance of the pieces was not realised and grief almost came to barrel 1317 which was sold for scrap in 1948. Barrel 1489 had been transported to Port Wakefield Proof and Experimental Range in South Australia. Luckily, both barrels were located and returned to the fort.**



THE BATTLE FOR LEROS

By Dr Peter Schenk

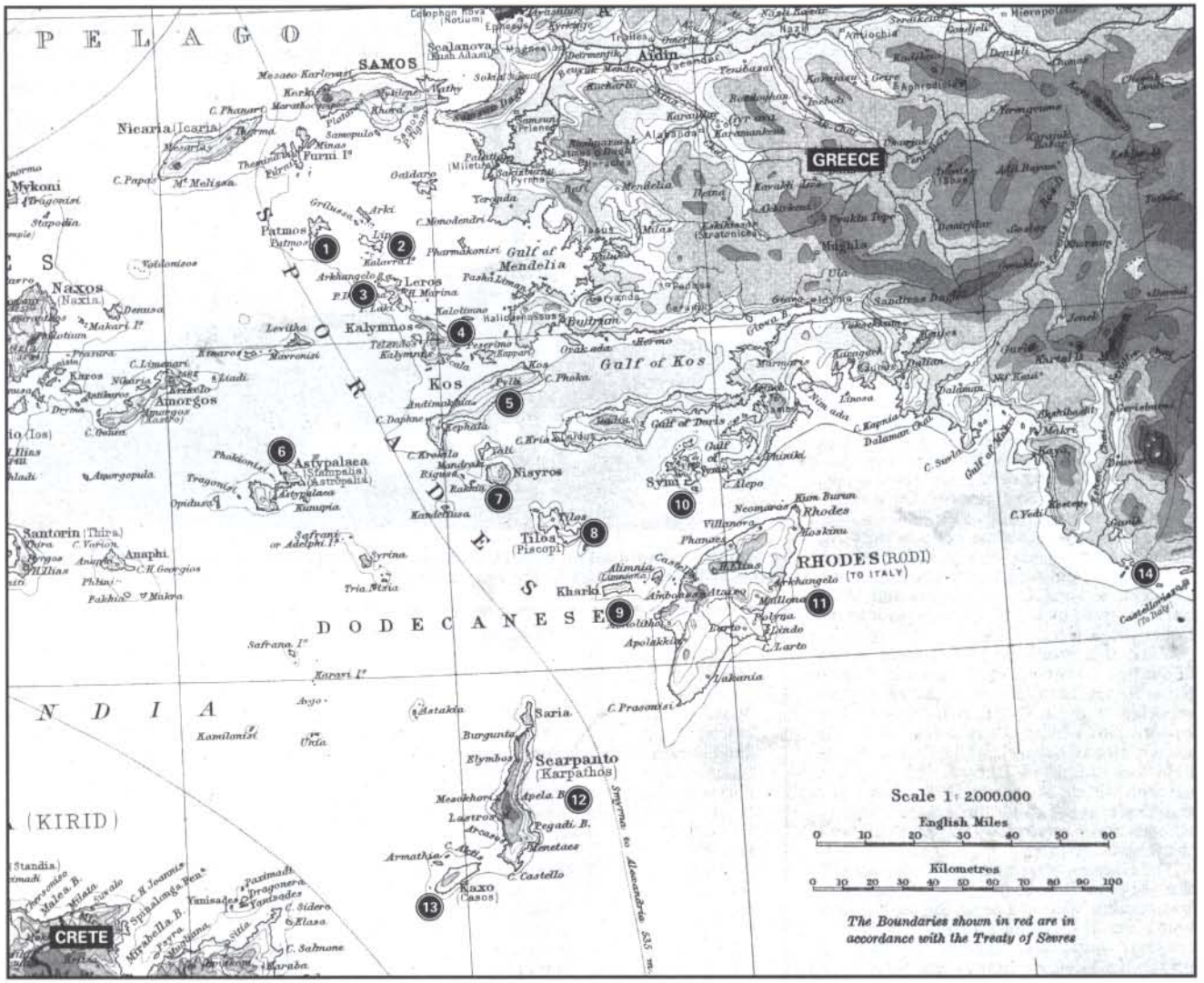
Following the Allied landings in Sicily in July 1943, Mussolini's government came under increasing pressure and was finally overthrown by Marshal Badoglio later that month (see *After the Battle* No. 77). As a result, the German High Command became very concerned about the will of its ally to continue the fight; fears which proved only too realistic when the Italians capitulated on September 8 following the Allied landing on the Italian mainland at Reggio di Calabria five days earlier.

Top: **The battle won, Hans Weiser and Lutz Popp, both paratroops with I. Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 2, reflect on their victory in the combined air-sea assault on Leros.** *Above:* **The castle still dominates Leros town.**

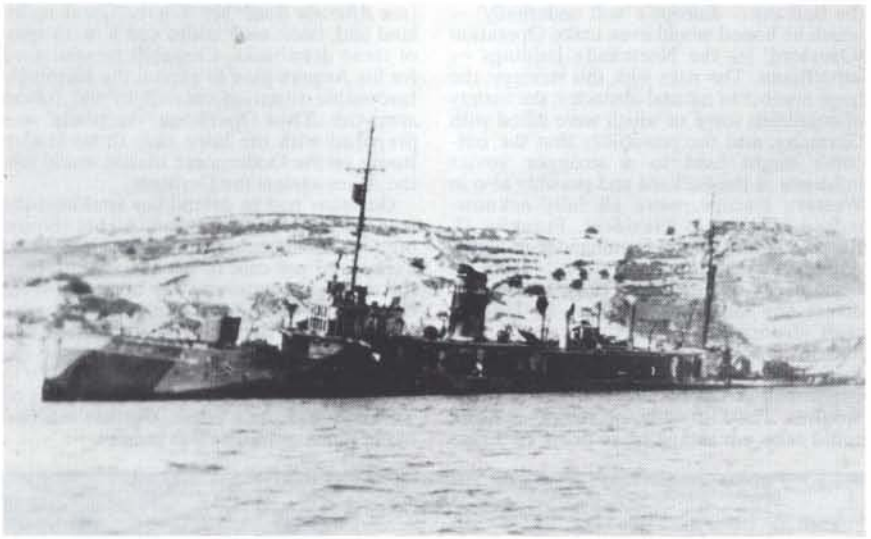
British plans for the Dodecanese — those islands along the Turkish coast captured by Italy from Turkey in 1912, but with a Greek population — date as early as November 1942. With the British El Alamein offensive and the Allied landings in North Africa under way, the British CIC Middle East, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, prepared plans for landings on Rhodes as a key target; on Kos because of its airfield; and on Leros with its harbour and naval batteries. The capture of Samos, a Greek island occupied by the Italians, was regarded as of lesser importance.

The primary objective was to secure Turkey's entry into the war. It was an idea that the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had already tried during the Great War with the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign. His hope was to use Turkey's 46 divisions with Allied support for an advance through the Balkans — Europe's 'soft underbelly' — which he hoped would even make Operation 'Overlord' — the Normandy landings — superfluous. The risks with this strategy: the large number of natural obstacles; the variety of countries, some of which were allied with Germany; and the possibility that the outcome might lead to a stronger Soviet influence in the Balkans and possibly also in Western Europe, were all fully acknowledged by the US President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and by the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Forces, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. They refused to divert any long-range fighters or landing craft from the Sicily/Italy operations, notwithstanding the fact that support from P-38 Lightnings would be vital for Aegean operations as Cyprus was too far away for Spitfires. The Luftwaffe, on the other hand, could take advantage of airfields on Crete (see *After the Battle* No. 47), the Greek mainland and, later, on Rhodes and Kos. In spite of these drawbacks, Churchill pressed hard for his Aegean plan to exploit the seemingly favourable situation created by the Italian armistice. Thus Operation 'Accolade' was prepared with the hope that those Italian troops on the Dodecanese islands would join the Allies against the Germans.

Germany had to defend her vital interests in the eastern Mediterranean. All her chrome ore for armour steels came from Greece and Turkey; 60 per cent of her bauxite ore used for making aluminium was imported from Greece, as well as 29 per cent of antimony ore and 21 per cent of copper ore. Important, too, was the necessity of denying airfields to the Allies that could threaten the oilfields in Romania where 50 per cent of Germany's oil was produced. As a result, German reaction to the Italian armistice was prompt.



To put into context the events which took place in the latter part of 1943 in the Aegean Sea (lying between Greece, occupied by Germany since May 1941, and Turkey, nominally neutral but having signed a treaty of friendship with Germany the following month), we must first look at the history of the area. Ownership of a dozen or so islands in the eastern Aegean known as the Dodecanese (from the Greek '12 islands') had long been in dispute. They were originally part of ancient Greece although lying closer to Turkey (which called them the Sporades), but by the 18th century the Turks had become overtly concerned about Greek nationalism right on their doorstep. In 1869, the Turkish government integrated the islands with their territory, an arrangement which prevailed until they were lost to Italy in the Italo-Turkish war of 1912 (Greece occupied Ikaria). This map shows the situation as defined in the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 between the Allies and Turkey in which the latter renounced all title to the Dodecanese in favour of Italy. However, the treaty was never ratified but part was embodied in the Treaty of Lausanne which ended the Greco-Turkish war of 1920-22. Thus, the Second World War began with a chain of islands close to Turkey, having a predominantly Greek population, but being governed from Italy. During the war, they were contested by the British, but occupied by the Germans after the Italian armistice in 1943. In 1945, they came under British jurisdiction until it was decided in 1946 that they should pass to Greece. Due to their varied history, the islands have several names, both ancient and modern Greek, and Italian. In this article, we have used the Anglicised names used during the war but have given alternatives where confusion might occur. They are: [1] Patmos; [2] Lipso; [3] Leros; [4] Kalymnos (Calino); [5] Kos (Cos); [6] Astypalaea (Stampalia); [7] Nisyros; [8] Tilos (Piscopi); [9] Kharki; [10] Symi; [11] Rhodes (Rodi); [12] Scarpanto (Karpathos); [13] Kaxo (Casos); [14] Castelrosso (Kastellorizo).



Left: **The British minesweeper *Widnes* beached at Suda Bay, Crete, in 1941.**

GERMAN FORCES IN GREECE

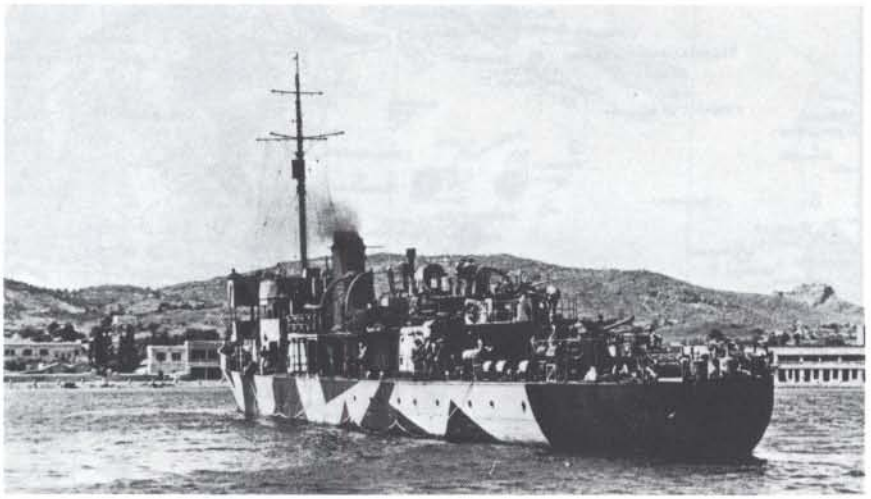
Mainland Greece was held in 1943 by Heeresgruppe E which operated under the Befehlshaber Südost. The military commander of Greece, General der Flieger Wilhelm Speidel, was assigned the 11. Luftwaffe-Feld-Division and 104. Jäger-Division as operational units in July 1943, and later LXVIII. Armeekorps with 1. Panzer-Division and 117. Jäger-Division. The vital Corinth Canal was defended by Luftwaffen-Jäger-Regiment 22. The commander of the Salonika/Aegean area, Generalleutnant Curt Pflugradt, with 1. Gebirgs-Division was later given the 7th Bulgarian Division. The 22. Infanterie-Division under Generalleutnant Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller, who had been awarded the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves for the part his division had played in taking Sebastopol, was stationed in the western part of Crete. It was the only army division specially equiped for air transport. On Rhodes, a new division, Sturmdivision Rhodos, was being established, but as yet was only the strength of a brigade with some 8,000 men. Additionally, the Aegean islands of Lemnos, Mytilene, Lesbos, Chios, Aegina and Milos were occupied by German forces prior to the Italian armistice.

Until the armistice, the Italian Army under the command of Generale Angelo Rossi in southern Greece and the Aegean reported to the LXVIII. Armeekorps. The eastern part of Crete was defended by the Italian Siena Division, while Italian troops held the islands of Eubœa, the Cyclades (except Milos), the southern Sporades and the Dodecanese, and the greater part of Rhodes and Castelrosso (Kastellorizo) with the Regina Division.

The German Navy had very weak forces in the Aegean Sea under the command of Vizeadmiral Werner Lange, the most potent being the 21. U-Jagd-Flottille (submarine chasers) under the command of Korvettenkapitän Günther Brandt. His force comprised a variety of vessels including two minelayers, *Drache* (the former Yugoslavian seaplane tender *Zmaj*) and *Bulgaria* (a former Bulgarian steamer); a torpedo boat, *TA10*; the former French light destroyer *La Pomone*, scuttled at Toulon (see *After the Battle* No. 76); two small fishing trawlers; a former Swedish yacht; the ex-British minesweeper *Widnes*, sunk and recovered at Suda, Crete; and six caiques (former Greek sailing vessels) with new auxiliary engines. Additionally, the minesweepers of the 12. Räumboot-Flottille and the Küstenschutz-Flottille (coast guard flotillas) Attika and Saloniki could be made available.

At the Italian armistice, six old destroyers and a minelayer lay in the harbours of Piraeus and Suda. Their Italian commanders were persuaded by the Germans to hand over their ships intact and, after being refurbished, they later formed the basis of the 9. Torpedoboot-Flottille.

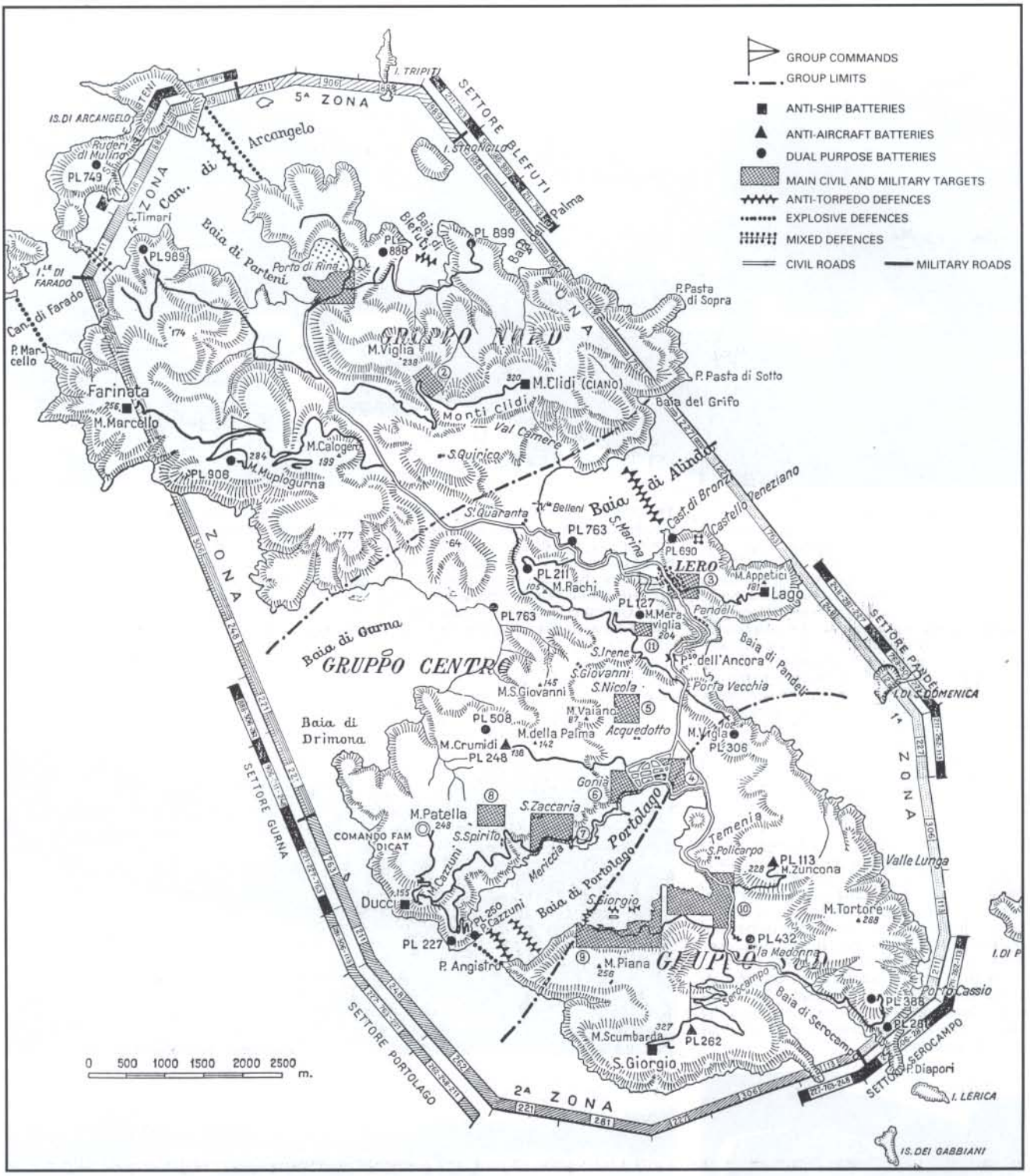
The Luftwaffe was present in Greece with the X. Fliegerkorps of Luftflotte 4. The III. and IV. Gruppe of JG27 (Bf 109s) in Athens-Kalamaki were earmarked for the defence of the Romanian airfields but later also fulfilled missions for the Aegean campaign from Rhodes. The 11. Staffel of ZG26 (Bf 110s) flew from Athens-Eleusis. I. and II./StG3 (36 Ju 87s each) and 13./StG151 were also initially at Eleusis and, from September 27, at Rhodes, while 12./KG100 (12 Do 217s) flew night missions from Athens-Tatoi against Allied shipping with glider bombs. The main bomber force against the Dodecanese was I. and II./LG1 with Ju 88s and Ju 188s, and III./LG1 with He 111s, based at Athens-Thaoi; II./ KG51 with Ju 88s were present only until October.



Having been bombed on May 20 that year, the *Widnes* was salvaged by the Germans and was back in service in the Aegean as the *UJ 2109* two years later.

ITALIAN BATTERIES ON LEROS

Name	*Armament*	*Location*
Naval Batteries		
Ducci	4 152mm L/50, 1 120mm L/45	Mount Cazzuni (Katsouni)
San Giorgio	3 152mm L/40, 1 102mm L/35	Mount Scumbarda
Ciano	4 152mm L/40	Mount Clidi
Farinata	4 120mm L/45	Mount Marcello (Markelos)
Lago	4 120mm L/45	Mount Appetici (Apetiki)
P.L. 388	4 102mm L/35	Mount Diapori
P.L. 899	4 76mm L/50	Cape Asfougaros
P.L. 690	2 76mm L/50	Santa Marina, Castello dei Bronzi
P.L. 508	2 76mm L/50	Mount Crumidi
P.L. 250	3 76mm L/40	Cape Cazzuni (Katsouni)
P.L. 432	3 76mm L/40	La Madonna
P.L. 306	2 76mm L/40	Mount Vigla
P.L. 763 Alinda	2 76mm L/40	Alinda
P.L. 763 Gurna	2 76mm L/40	Gurna (Gourna)
Anti aircraft Batteries		
P.L. 113	4 76mm L/40	Mount Zuncona (Tsigounas)
P.L. 248	6 76mm L/40	Mount Palma (Vagias)
P.L. 262	6 76mm L/40	Mount Scumbarda
Mixed Naval and Anti aircraft Batteries		
P.L. 306	6 102mm L/35	Mount Vigla
P.L. 211	4 102mm L/35	Mount Rachi (Rahi)
P.L. 227	4 102mm L/35	Cape Cazzuni (Katsouni)
P.L. 127	6 90mm L/53	Mount Meraviglia (Merovigli)
P.L. 281	6 76mm L/40	Mount Diapori
P.L. 906	4 76mm L/40	Mount Muplogurna
P.L. 989	4 76mm L/40	Cape Timari
P.L. 888	4 76mm L/40	Blefuti (Plefouti)
P.L. 749	4 76mm L/40	Arcangelo Island (Arkangelos)



BRITISH FORCES FOR THE AEGEAN

Having occupied the Dodecanese since the mid-1920s, Italy had had plenty of time to fortify the islands. Leros, with sheltered anchorages, was one of the most important. Its defences were divided into three zones: Gruppo Nord, Centro, and Sud. Each zone was provided with a major battery: Ciano in the north; Ducci in the middle and San Giorgio in the south. Over 20 other battery positions (see table opposite) protected every inch of the coastline. Mount Rachi lay in the centre of Leros spanning the narrow neck between Alinda and Gurna Bays which divided the island into two. After the Italian armistice in September 1943, the British moved first and sent in an occupying force from the Royal Irish Fusiliers and Royal West Kent Regiment.

Churchill's efforts to get the 8th Indian Division for an operation against Rhodes were turned down by Eisenhower on August 31 after the Quadrant Conference held in Quebec had set limits to operations in the Aegean. General Wilson was therefore left with only the British 234th Brigade which had become available after the siege of Malta had been lifted. The 234th Brigade had been moved from Malta to Alexandria in June 1943 after the threat of an invasion of Malta had vanished in the autumn of 1942. The men underwent mountain warfare training in Lebanon and carried out exercises for combined operations in Palestine and on the Bitter Lakes.

The British also allocated some 280 aircraft to the Aegean, based on Cyprus and Kos. These were later reinforced by USAAF and RAF North-West African Command aircraft. In order to neutralise German air bases in Greece, forces were allocated from the US Ninth Air Force and two RAF heavy bomber squadrons.

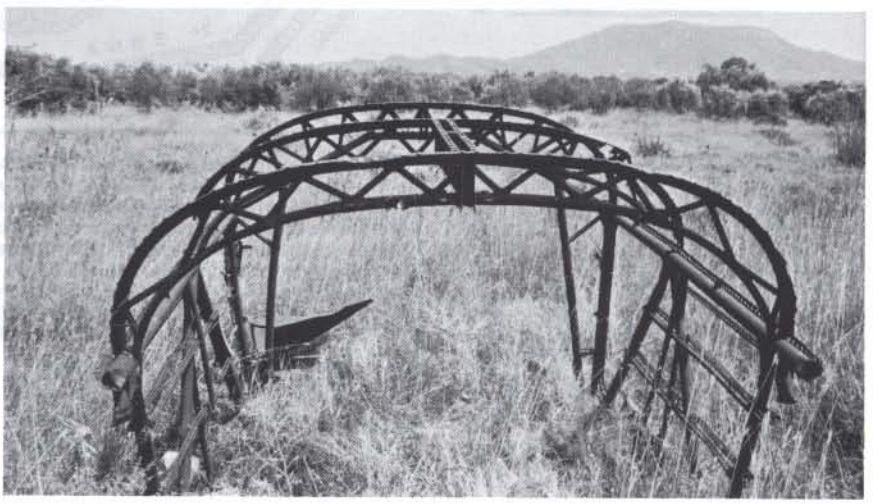
The Allies achieved a far better power balance at sea. The British Mediterranean Fleet had in the Aegean six fleet destroyers, two Hunt-class destroyers, ten submarines from Nos. 1 and 10 Submarine Flotillas, sixteen motor launches, ten caiques from the Levant Schooner Flotilla, and three RAF high-speed launches. The lack of fighter cover limited operations to the night hours, although this disadvantage was partly balanced by Turkey's permission to use its territorial waters during the day.

THE OTHER ISLANDS

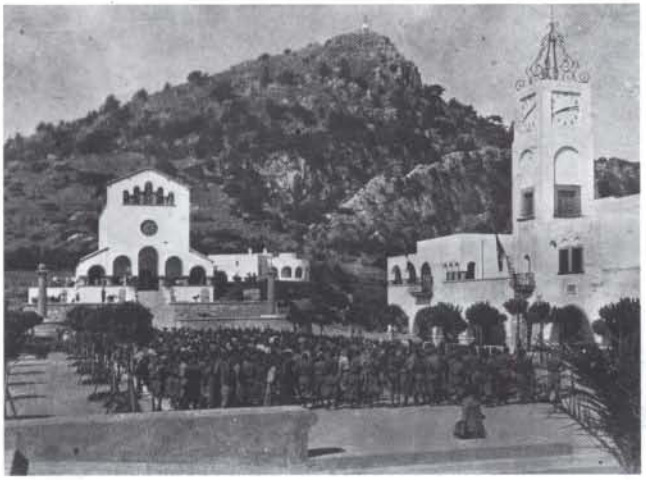
After the Italian armistice on September 8, things began to develop rapidly. That same day, an Allied appeal was radioed from Cairo to all Italian troops to change sides. However, the following day, the Italian Siena Division surrendered to German troops on Crete without resistance. On the other hand, German troops shipped to Corfu and Cefalonia (Kephallenia) on September 6 proved unable to round up the Italian garrisons there. Generale Antonio Gandin, commander of the Acqui Division on Cefalonia, was willing to come to terms with the Germans but some officers of the division had made contact with the Greek resistance movement and supplied arms to them. On the morning of September 13, two German ferry lighters approaching Argostoli harbour were fired upon; one, *F495*, sank, the other had to surrender. Fighting started on September 15 after the negotiations came to nothing, ending with the capitulation of Gandin on September 22. According to a Führerbefehl issued by Hitler on September 11, all Italian officers offering resistance were to be shot instantly, and, of the Italian garrison, over 4,000 men were killed (*see page 40*).

As for Corfu, a reinforced German battalion landed there on September 24, and in a few days completed the mopping up of the island. The entrance into the Adriatic was now in German hands.

The Italian armistice on September 8 drastically changed the situation throughout the Aegean. While the Germans took immediate steps to counter the defection of their former ally, the British sought to step into the vacuum with the meagre forces at their disposal. Apart from landing on the more important islands, the British also tried to persuade the Italian garrisons to change sides. However, as far as Rhodes was concerned, while the British were still attempting to reach an agreement with the Italians, German forces took over the island. *Above:* **Italian light tanks near the village of Psinthos with the comparison by Dr Kostas Kogiopoulus 50 years later** *(below).*



Wreckage on the edge of Maritsa airfield on Rhodes. *Left:* **Caproni 310 and** *above* **a Savoia-Marchetti, identified locally as coming from an SM.82 tri-motor transport.**



Left: **The headquarters of Generale Michele Scaroina, the commander of the Regina Division defending Rhodes, was here at Campochiaro.** *Right:* **Now under Greek tenure, the town has changed its name to Eleousa. The German force already on Rhodes attacked on September 10 and within a few hours, the Italian garrison had surrendered.**

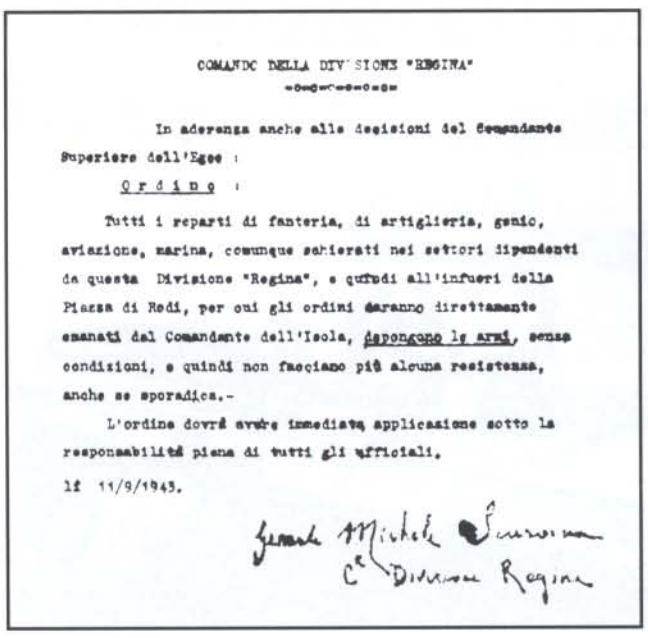
German operations in the Aegean met with more easy success. The island of Scarpanto (Karpathos) was occupied on September 6 with little or no Italian resistance. In the Cyclades, the caique *UJ 2141* of the 21. U-Jagd-Flottille entered the harbour on Siros in the hope of persuading the 3,000 Italians there to surrender. Fruitless talks went on for three days, but, after the Germans threatened with a heavy air attack, the Italians promptly surrendered.

At Andros, another of the Cyclades Islands, the caique *UJ 2145* was forced to leave after a short exchange of fire. The Germans returned at dawn with the *UJ 2110, 2111, 2141* and *2145*, two motor fishing vessels, and two ferry lighters with two companies of infantry and a light battery. The infantry companies made two opposed landings near the harbour of Kastron and, next day, the ships forced the harbour and brought the battery ashore. The following day, the garrison surrendered.

The capture of the islands of Tinos, Zea and Naxos by *UJ 2141* and *2145* was not difficult, and the rest of the Italian-held Cyclades were taken by *UJ 2111*.

In the Dodecanese, Rhodes was the key island and, on the night of September 9/10, a three-man team led by Major the Earl Jellicoe of the Special Boat Squadron, parachuted into it, to try to convince the Italian Governor and commander of the Italian Aegean Islands, Admiral Luigi Campioni, to co-operate and hold the island for the British. However, next day, the German Sturmdivision Rhodos attacked the Italian Regina Division. Generale Michele Scaroina was taken prisoner and, the following day, Campioni surrendered all 40,000 troops on the island.

Above: **These soldiers stand outside the house, faintly visible in the background, where the instrument of surrender** *(below left)*, **which effectively ended hostilities between German and Italian forces in the Dodecanese, was signed by Generale Scaroina.**



COMANDO DELLA DIVISIONE "REGINA"

In aderenza anche alle decisioni del Comandante Superiore dell'Egeo :

Ordino :

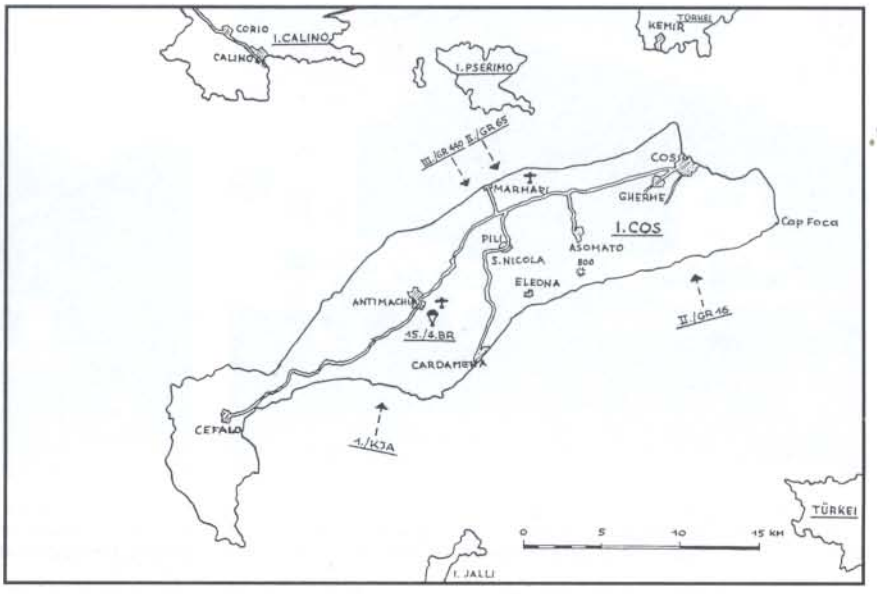
Tutti i reparti di fanteria, di artiglieria, genio, aviazione, marina, comunque schierati nei settori dipendenti da questa Divisione "Regina", e quindi all'infuori della Piazza di Rodi, per cui gli ordini daranno direttamente emanati dal Comandante dell'Isola, depongano le armi, senza condizioni, e quindi non facciano più alcuna resistenza, anche se sporadica.-

L'ordine dovrà avere immediata applicazione sotto la responsabilità piena di tutti gli ufficiali.

li 11/9/1943.

Generale Michele Scaroina
C.te Divisione Regina

Above: **Today, the house at Afandou is a Red Cross clinic. Hitler took a harsh view of the defection of his former ally and on September 11, the same day that the surrender was signed, he ordered that any Italian officers offering resistance were to be shot.**



The next island in line was Kos (Cos) but, unlike Rhodes where the Italians had been the sole enemy, now British forces had beaten the Germans to it. By September 17, the island was defended by the 1st Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry together with two squadrons of the RAF Regiment and a number of Spitfires. In addition, there was the resident Italian garrison of some 3,600 men although their will to fight was questionable. Generalleutnant Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller *(left)*, commanding the 22. Infanterie-Division, was in charge of the task force detailed to capture Kos.

Yet, Operation 'Accolade' went ahead. Advance forces from the Special Boat Squadron and the Long Range Desert Group were landed on Kos, Leros and Samos and the 234th Brigade was despatched by air and sea from Syria and Palestine to occupy them. The 1st Durham Light Infantry was shipped to Kos, the 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers (the 'Faughs') and B Company of the 2nd Royal West Kents to Leros, and the rest of this battalion to Samos. Two Spitfire squadrons, No. 7 Squadron, SAAF, and No. 74 Squadron, RAF, flew into Kos, and No. 2901 Squadron of the RAF Regiment with 24 30mm Hispanos, No. 2909 Squadron, RAF Regiment, with 9 20mm Hispanos, and the 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RA with 18 40mm Bofors were transported to it as well.

On September 23, a German convoy with Italian prisoners from Rhodes was intercepted by the destroyer *Eclipse*. The torpedo boat *TA10* and the transports *Donizetti* and *Dithmarschen* were sunk. This disaster led to the Germans deciding to land on Kos and Leros in order to eliminate them as a British air and naval base. Next day, Generalleutnant Müller of the 22. Infanterie-Division, on Crete, was ordered to prepare for the landing on Kos (Operation 'Eisbär').

The battle began with air attacks on Antimachia airfield on Kos, from the 18th onwards. By September 29, eight Spitfires, five Dakotas and two Italian Cant Z 501s had been destroyed on the ground or in air battles (against five Ju 88s, two He 111s, two Bf 109s and one Messerschmitt lost by the Germans) and Antimachia airfield had been rendered inoperable. Two emergency airstrips had been destroyed too, and all supplies had now to be dropped by parachute. Meanwhile, on September 26, Ju 88 bombers had attacked Portolago (Lakki) harbour on Leros, sinking the destroyers *Queen Olga* and *Intrepid*.

On September 18, the Luftwaffe began to prepare the way for the invasion by attacking the RAF on the airfield at Antimachia and at two dispersed strips like this one sited west of Kos town. By October 1, each was unservicable and the flights of No. 7 Squadron (South African Air Force) and No. 74 Squadron (RAF) had lost eight pilots and twelve aircraft. The four serviceable Spitfires which remained were virtually useless in the face of German air superiority. Although Beaufighters based in Cyprus tried to assist in the battle, they, too, suffered heavy losses.

Apart from the 22. Infanterie-Division, the Küstenjager — the German equivalent of the British Special Boat Service — were to land in Kamara Bay, south of Antimachia, and link up with their parachute comrades in the 'Brandenburg' regiment dropping near the airfield. Here, the Küstenjager, under the command of Hauptmann Armin Kuhlmann, prepare to depart from the island of Naxos on October 2.

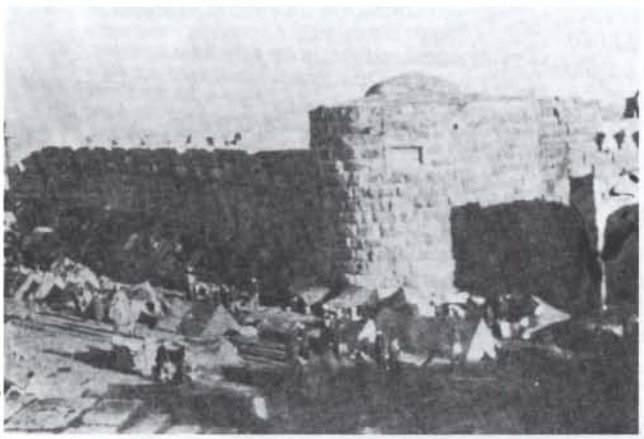
The Durham Light Infantry, under Lieutenant-Colonel L. R. F. Kenyon, had been split into three groups: one covering Antimachia airfield; one Kos itself; and the third, south of the town. The battle lasted throughout October 3 but, by the early hours of the next day, the position was hopeless and the survivors had withdrawn into the hills overlooking the southern coast. At 0600 that morning, Colonel Kenyon sent out his last wireless message before he was made prisoner with nearly 1,400 of his men. *Left:* **German troops approach the castle fortress in Kos along what is now Palm Avenue** *(right).*

On October 1, the German invasion force for Kos embarked from Piraeus, Suda and Heraklion in five transports, nine ferry lighters end three engineer assault boats, escorted by two minelayers, four caiques, two motor fishing vessels, three motor boats, and motor minesweepers from 12. R-Flottille. For the operation, the 22. Infanterie-Division had been reinforced by two companies from the Division zbV 'Brandenburg', the special division of the Abwehr (Armed Forces Intelligence Service) which included volunteers who could speak foreign languages and whose task it was to operate behind enemy lines. One of the companies was 1./Küstenjager, a detachment not unlike that of the British Special Boat Squadron; the other was a parachute company, 15./Jäger-Regiment 4 'Brandenburg'.

On October 3, the 22. Infanterie-Division landed II./Gren.Rgt. 65 and III./Gren.Rgt. 440 at Marmari Bay in the north of Kos, II./Gren.Rgt 16 south of Kos town, and the Küstenjäger at Kamara Bay. The parachute company dropped south of Antimachia airfield.

By the end of the day, the first and second groups had linked up and the island been cut in half. The British commander, Lieutenant-Colonel L. R. F. Kenyon, ordered the withdrawal of all forces to the hills. However, the battle was already lost. Antimachia airfield fell during the night and next day, October 4, Colonel Kenyon himself was taken prisoner. In all, 1,388 British and 3,145 Italian soldiers were taken prisoner on Kos. The British had 65 killed, and the Germans 14. The Italian commander, Colonel Felice Leggio, and 101 of his officers were executed.

Left: **Although there was no caption with this snapshot taken by an unknown German soldier, Peter identified the men as belonging to 3. Kompanie of Flak-Batterie 22 — an army anti-aircraft unit with 20mm guns mounted on half-tracks.** *Right:* **However, like so many *After the Battle* investigations, once the location was pinpointed, in this case west of Kephalos (Cefalo) at the extreme western end of the island, all became clear. Peter realised that picture must have been taken on October 4, showing the last Italian resistance being dealt with as the Italians fought on right to the end.**



Italian prisoners are rounded up beneath the castle walls but, for the officers, Hitler's order of September 11 was to prove fatal.

Left: **At first glance, just another picture from a soldier's photo album but this time one full of significance. Generalleutnant Müller, with hands on hips, well aware of the fate due to any captured Italian officers, stands nonchalantly beside a British Jeep while Hauptmann Kuhlmann, of 1./Küstenjäger interrogates a group of Italians who appear to be examining a map spread out on the bonnet.** *Right:* **Peter identified the location by the mountain range in the background and then realised its importance for the photo had been taken at Tingaki, near the salt pan east of Kos town, where the Italian officers were shot.**

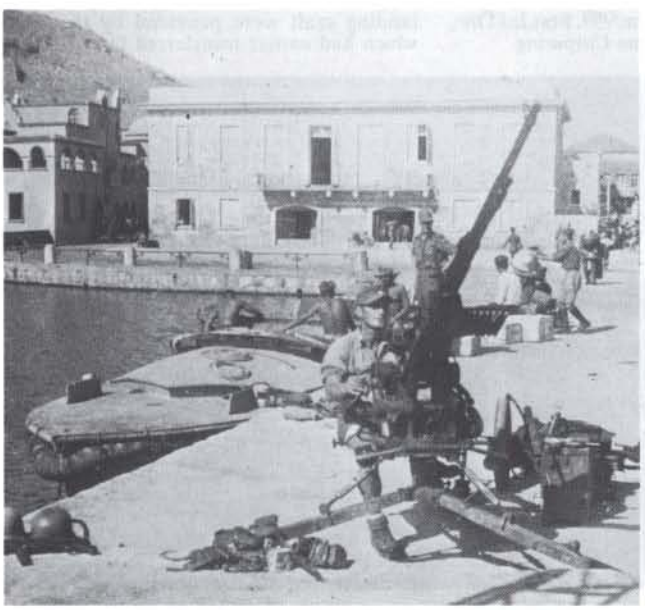
All the officer prisoners were held at a PoW camp at Linopoti, 102 having been captured in the castle and another 16 in the Antimachia area. Of this total, the lives of 17 were spared because they had been non-combatants. On October 6, the remainder including the garrison commander, Colonel Felice Leggio, were taken to a spot near the salt flat where they were shot in groups of ten and buried in several mass graves. There was at least one eyewitness, Michael Papatheodorakis, who still lives just 150 metres from where the executions took place. In March 1945, investigators found eight of the graves containing, respectively, six, four, eleven, ten, eight, nine, seven and eleven bodies. Of those 66, only 42 could be identified. They were taken to Kos and buried in a single grave *(above left).* **Dr K. Kogiopoulos, a Greek historian who has investigated the killings, believes that the missing 35 officers either lie in an undiscovered grave or were taken to another unknown location. Colonel Leggio's body was never identified. After Kos was returned to Greece, the remains were exhumed and returned to Italy for burial in the military cemetery at Bari.** *Above right:* **Although the original plaque remains to be seen at Kos, in 1992 the Greek municipality erected a new memorial in the cemetery listing all 101 names** *(right).*

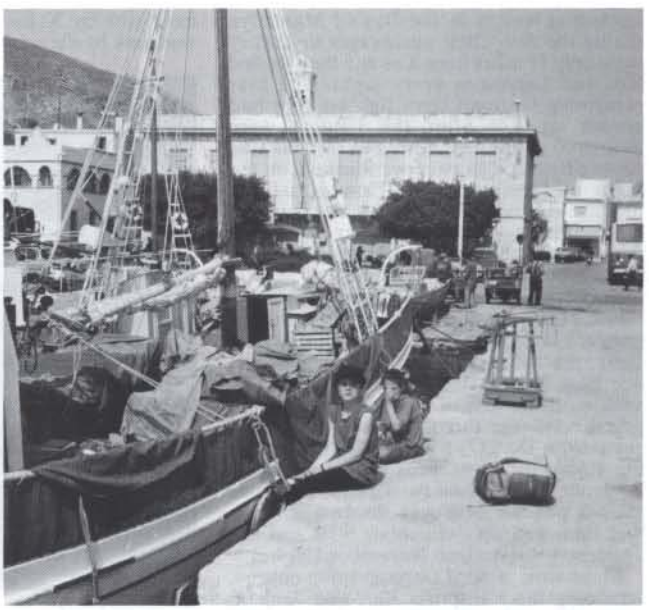
LA CITTA DI COS
POSE
IN MEMORIA
DEGLI UFFICIALI
ITALIANI
MARTIRI
DELLE
F SSE
DI LINOP TI
OTTOBRE 1943
OTTOBRE 1992
GENNARO FALASCHI OLIMPIO FERREIRA PIETRO FIADINO MATTEO
FIORENTINI ALDO FOSSARI BERNARDINO FREZZA GIUSEPPE
LABATTAGLIA IVO LEGGIO FELICE LETTIERI ANTONIO LIBARDONI
VINCENZO LO PIANO FRANCESCO LO RUSSO MICHELE LUPONE FEDERICO
MAINARDIS MARIANO MARIANI ENEO MANCINI GIOVANNI MARINO PROSPERO
MALTONI DOMENICO MARRONCHI ALBERTO MENEGATTI CINO
MASTROGIOVANNI ANTONIO MONACRESI REMO MUSICURI IREE NOCERA
GASPARE OLIVERI GIOVANNI PAOLA LUIGI PETRONI DOMENICO PICARDI LUIGI
PINTO VINCENZO PIZZICAROLI LUIGI POGGIANI PIETRO QUARANTA PIETRO REA
ELEUTERIO RIZZOLI GUIDO ROSSI RAFFAELE ROTELLA FRANCESCO ROVELLI GIUSEPPE
SARDELLI MARIO SCARVAGLIERI VITO SCOTTI EMILIO SIMONE RICCARDO SILVESTRI
BRUNO SORIANI GIOVANNI STRACUZZI CESARE TAURI VINCENZO TERRASTICH
GIOVANNI TERRUGIA GIOVANNI VAGLIASINDI GAETANO VALLETTA FRANCESCO
VELASQUEZ ANGELO VEZZOSI FILIPPO VITI LIVIO ZADDEI ARLO ZAFFAGNINI ENRICO

Having captured Kos, the Küstenjäger use the beach at Marmari on the northern shore (where battalions of Grenadier-Regiments 65 and 440 came ashore) to prepare for their next operation against the adjacent island of Kalymnos.

Left: **This landing, which was a precursor to the main attack on Leros, was under the command of Hauptmann Kuhlmann.** *Right:* **So confident was he that his only weapons were a white flag to parley with the Italian garrison and the threat of air attack if they did not surrender. His Italian interpreter can be seen on the left.**

On October 7, Hauptmann Armin Kuhlmann sailed with his Küstenjäger company in the two surviving assault boats to the island of Kalymnos to persuade the Italian commander to surrender, threathening air attacks if he resisted. The plot worked, and 350 Italians with two batteries handed over their arms. Thus, a foothold for the assault on Leros was won without bloodshed, giving the German navy many hiding places in the narrow bays.





The Küstenjäger took over the Italian HQ beside Kalymnos harbour, this picture *(left)* **being taken on October 7.**

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ASSAULT ON LEROS

On October 5, General Müller was ordered to prepare for the assault on Leros on October 9, employing basically the same forces as were engaged on Kos. However, before these troops could be withdrawn, they had to be replaced by IX. Bataillon of the 999. Festungsinfanterie-Division — static troops of limited fighting value partly made up of foreigners. The implementation of this relief was, however, seriously hampered by the actions of the Royal Navy. On October 7, the first troop convoy was surprised by the cruisers *Sirius* and *Penelope* and the destroyers *Faulkner* and *Fury*, and the transports *Olympos*, *UJ 2111* and five of the six ferry lighters were sunk. Another convoy, with the minelayers *Drache* and *Bulgaria*, was caught by the submarine *Unruly*, which hit the *Bulgaria*, laden with 350 soldiers, with a torpedo. She sank in one minute. Losses from both convoys numbered 659 men. Not only were the troops for the occupation of Kos lost, but also the landing craft for the assault on Leros. Consequently, the operation (code-named 'Leopard') had to be postponed until new landing craft had arrived and the captured Italian destroyers become operational to escort them.

However, three days later, rocket-firing Beaufighters paid Kuhlmann's headquarters a visit, injuring the Hauptmann so that he was unable to lead his unit in the operation against Leros, initially code-named 'Leopard' but later changed to 'Taifun'. The Küstenjäger then took over the local hospital as a replacement headquarters . . .

. . . but on the 16th the RAF called again scoring several direct hits.

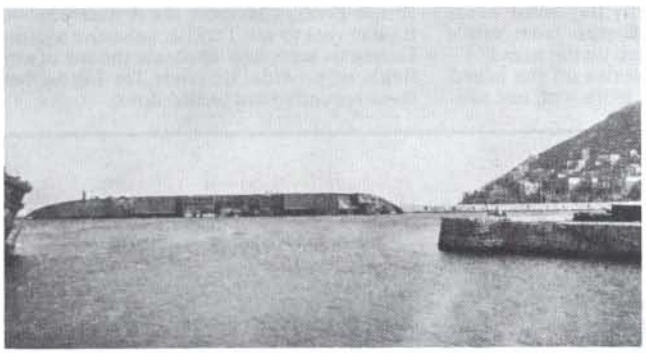
Meanwhile, the Royal Navy was also experiencing mounting losses. On October 9, the destroyer *Panther* was sunk and the aircraft cruiser *Carlisle* damaged beyond repair in the Scarapanto Strait by a German air attack. To escape such daylight attacks, the British destroyers now began using Turkish territorial waters in the Bay of Mandalya during the day. Their anchorages in Turkey were only 11 miles from Kos and they shelled Kos and Kalymnos every night. The four remaining German ferry lighters that had stayed on Kos after the landing were destroyed in this way, as well as *UJ 2109* (the former British minesweeper *Widnes*), on the night of October 16/17. However, these nightly excursions were also not without risks. On the night of October 15/16, the minelayer *Drache* surreptitiously laid a mine barrage between Kalymnos and Kos, and, on October 22, two Hunt-class destroyers ran into it. *Hurworth* sank and *Adrias* was forced to beach in Turkey. Two days later, the fleet destroyer *Eclipse*, carrying 200 men of the 4th East Kents, struck another mine and sank with the loss of 135 soldiers and 135 sailors. Another threat for the Royal Navy came from Do 217s from 12./KG100 attacking during the night using the new remote-controlled glider bombs. The first of their victims was the destroyer *Rockwood* which was damaged on November 9/10 and the *Dulverton* was sunk on November 12/13.

Meanwhile, a third German troop convoy, including the transports *Karl* and *Trapani* with the XI. Bataillon of the 999. Fest.Inf.Div. on board, tried to break through. *Karl* was sunk by the submarine *Torbay* on October 16, but *Trapani* reached Kalymnos harbour and was unloaded, only to be destroyed by shelling on the night of October 17/18. Another transport, the *Ingenborg*, with the X. Bataillon/999. Fest.Inf.Div., was sunk by the submarine *Unsparing*.

The survivors were issued with captured arms and set about the task of securing Kos and Kalymnos. Antimachia airfield was made operational again so that important supplies could now be brought in by air. New landing craft were provided by the navy which had earlier transferred ferry lighters

From Italian hospital . . . to a German war headquarters . . . to a Greek hospital — such is the chequered history of buildings in the Dodecanese.

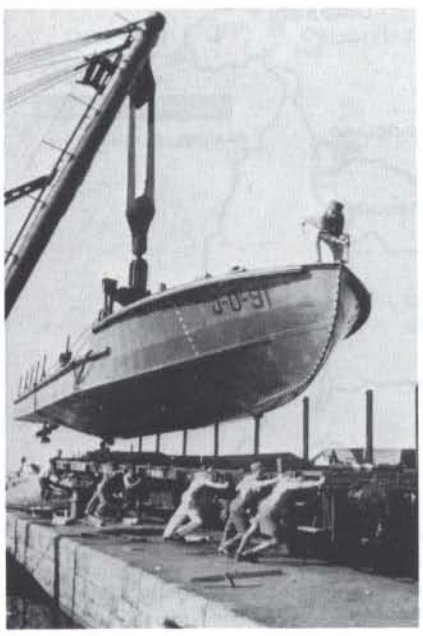
Other set-backs to the German invasion preparations at Kalymnos included the sinking of the *UJ 2109* (the former *Widnes* — see page 8) on the night of October 16/17 in Akti Bay *(above left)*, **between the two rocky promontories on the left.** *Above right:* **Peter dived on the spot but found little of the ship, save for this windlass sunk near the beach as an anchor.**

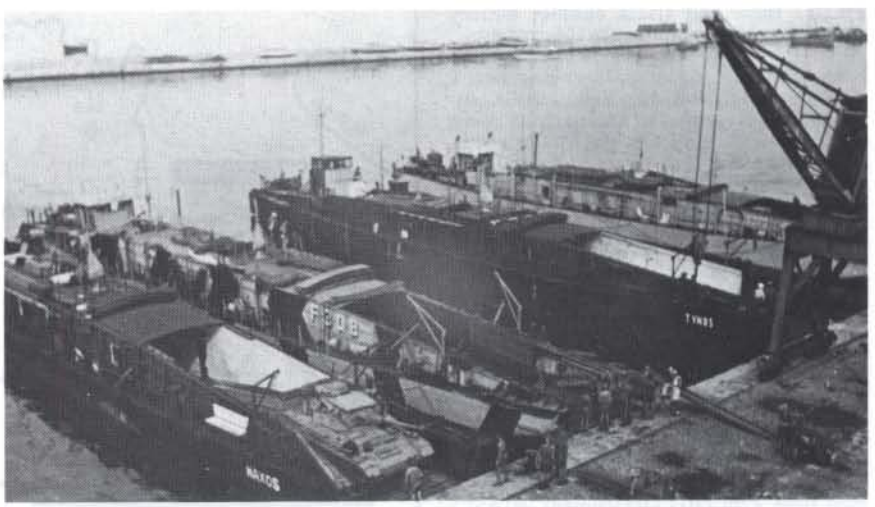


Earlier that day, the troop transport *Trapini* had been torpedoed but she managed to reach Kalymnos harbour and unload only to be hit by British shell-fire the next night after which she turned turtle and capsized.

from yards on the Danube via the Black Sea and the Dardanelles camouflaged as civilian vessels. Five of these, *F123*, *F124*, *F336*, *F370* and *F497* of 15. Landungs-Flotille, were still there and made avaiable. The army transported Pi.Ldgs.Kp. 780 (engineer landing company) under Oberleutnant Josef Bunte with 13 Pionierlandungsboote by rail to Piraeus (the port of Athens in Greece). These boats could be broken down into two pieces which could then be transported by lorry (see *After the Battle* No. 69). They were similar in size to the Allied LCM (Landing Craft, Mechanised) and could take one tank. In addition, two Siebel ferries were provided. These were constructed from two engineer bridging pontoons with a platform on top of them. Finally, the navy supplied nine Infantry or I-Boats. This was a development carried out by the Luftwaffe for Operation 'Sealion'. They were somewhat smaller than the Pionierlandungsboote and also collapsible for transport by rail. The transfer of these small craft from Piraeus to Kalymnos was an operation later nicknamed 'Children's Crusade' by the men involved. Oberleutnant Bunte also managed to obtain a 2cm anti-aircraft gun for every boat from a Luftwaffe unit. These were fixed on improvised mounts on fuel drums.

The entire loading capacity of the craft was utilised to transport II. Bataillon of Luftwaffen-Jäger-Regiment 22 from mainland Greece to the Dodecanese. All the craft gathered in Lavrion Bay and put to sea on November 5 after being attacked unsuccessfully with torpedoes. They reached Naoussa on Paros the next day where another air attack damaged an R-Boat from the escort. The fleet departed that night only to meet the destroyers *Penn* and *Pathfinder* which sank the escorting *UJ 2145*. The craft then hid in bays of Paros, where two Pionierlandungsboote had to be left behind because of engine trouble.





Left: **The I-Boat, which could be transported in two halves and assembled at its destination — in this case at Piraeus in Greece — played an important part in German invasion operations in the Dodecanese.** *Above:* **Ferry lighters were also used; two of these are still in civilian colours and markings to enable them to reach the Aegean using Turkish waters through the Dardanelles from the Danube and Black Sea.**

The next night was spent in the bays of Naxos because British destroyers were looking for them with searchlights, but the boats were well camouflaged and were not spotted. On November 8, the fleet reached Amorgos, harrassed — somewhat unsuccessfully — by 12 Beaufighters. The convoy was still playing cat and mouse with the British destroyers which searched in vain for the German boats camouflaged in the bays. From Amorgos, the fleet split up, one group sailing to Stampalia (Astipalea), beating off another air raid in the process, while the other made its way to Levitha. It was shelled during the night by destroyers, but without result, and on November 10 both groups reached Kos and Kalymnos. The departure of the two Siebel ferries was delayed and they sailed on their own, one being sunk by air attack on November 16.

On November 2, the code-word 'Leopard' for the Leros operation was replaced by 'Taifun' and General Müller moved his staff to Isolavecchia Bay on Kalymnos the day before the landing. Five groups were assembled, each designated after its commander:

Gruppe Schädlich with 1./Küstenjäger detachment under Leutnant Hans Schädlich (Hauptmann Kuhlmann had been wounded in an air raid on Kalymnos), sailing from Kalymnos, was to land in Pandeli Bay at the foot of Mount Appetici (Apetiki), capture Battery Lago on top and proceed to take Leros town.

Gruppe von Saldern under Major Sylvester von Saldern with II./Gren.Rgt. 65 from Kos and II./Luftwaffen-Jäger-Regiment 22 from Kalymnos was detailed to land in Grifo Bay (Kryphos) and on two beaches to the north of it. It was to take Battery Ciano on Mount Clidi and occupy Alinda Bay in order to prepare the way for the landing of reinforcements.

Gruppe Doerr under Hauptmann Erwin Doerr with III./Gren.Rgt. 440 leaving from Kalymnos was to land in Palma Bay (Vagias) and capture the Farinata batteries on Mount Marcello (Markelos) and P.L.906 on Mount Muplogurna in the north-west.

Gruppe Aschoff under Hauptmann Philipp Aschoff with II./Gren.Rgt. 16 from Kalymnos was to land in the southern part of Gurna (Gourna) Bay and in the small bays of Drimona (Drymonas) and Cefalo.

Gruppe Kühne with I./Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 2 under Hauptmann Martin Kühne, departing from Athens-Tatoi, was to drop near Mount Rachi, capture Battery P.L.211 there and attack another battery position on Mount Meraviglia (Merovigli).

In Athens, III. Bataillon/Jäger-Regiment 1 'Brandenburg' and 15. Fallschirm-Kompanie/Jäger-Regiment 4 'Brandenburg' were held in reserve, while General Müller's staff, the artillery, anti-tank guns and flak, as well as engineers, were to land with the second wave at Alinda.

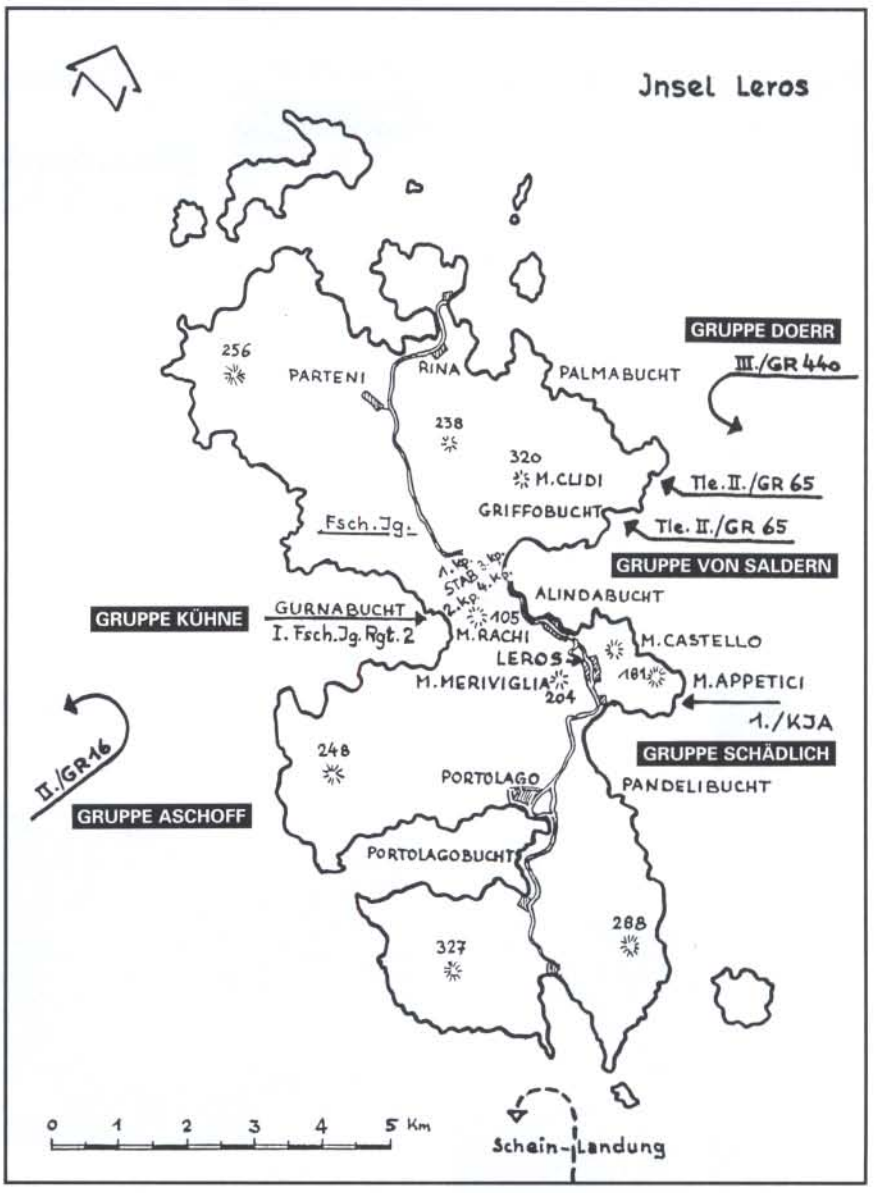
Meanwhile, on Leros, preparations for the defence continued. After reinforcements had arrived on November 5, the British had 2,000 men on the island: the 4th Royal East Kents (the 'Buffs') with 360 men; the 1st King's Own with 450 men; the 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers (the 'Faughs') with B Company of the 2nd Royal West Kents with 500 men; three batteries from the 1st Light AA Regiment, RA (250 men); one troop with 25-pounders (found on Samos) with 50 men; a detachment from the 9th Field Company Madras comprising sappers and miners; 50 men from 47th DID Detachment, RIASC; 100 men of the 161st Field Ambulance, RAMC; 70 men from the 570th Advanced Ordnance Depot, RAOC, and detachments from the Long Range Desert Group and Special Boat Squadron (100 men).

The British commander, Brigadier Robert A. Tilney, who did not reach the island until November 5, divided his troops into three sectors. In the northern sector were the 'Buffs', in the centre the 'Faughs' plus B Company of the 2nd Royal West Kents, and in the south the 1st King's Own less one company which was in fortress reserve. The intention was to mount any counter-attack as early as possible, although moving reserves was difficult because there were no lorries on the island. There were only a few Jeeps on the whole island. Headquarters of British and Italian forces was located on Mount Meraviglia.

The Italians had 5,000 men on the island (although only half were armed) under the command of Admiral Luigi Mascherpa, mainly distributed around the bays of Portolago (Lakki), Gurna, and Serocampo (Xerocampos). One battalion of the Regina Division with 1,200 men under Tenente Colonnello Guiseppe Luigi Volsi was situated west of Meraviglia. The 402nd Company Blackshirts (Centurione Calise) secured Blefuti (Plefouti) Bay while naval platoons with some 800 men from ship's crews were also distributed on the island.

The fixed Italian batteries on the island had all been built in the 1930s with one situated on almost every mountain top. Every approach to the islands was well covered by one or more batteries. Those on the largest mountains had a calibre of 6-inch (15.2cm), going down to 3-inch (7.5cm) for those guarding bays or harbours. While the guns were in open emplacements, they were still difficult to hit and only half of them were knocked out by the repeated Stuka attacks. Ammunition stores and crew shelters had been excavated in the rock. Fire control instruments were poor, but as the crews were well trained, the batteries proved very effective. There were also 12 heavy AA batteries and light AA guns centred around Mount Patella where the HQ for the Italian air defence was situated. Air attacks concentrated on the 58 heavy AA guns and, by November 12, 30 of them had been knocked out.

A vital disadvantage to the island defenders was the complete air superiority of the Luftwaffe, and no less than 140 raids were flown against Leros in October. In discussions with the Turkish Foreign Minister, M. Numan, in Cairo on November 5-8, the British Foreign Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, tried in vain to win Turkish assistance against Germany, especially to obtain the use of airfields to provide air cover for Leros, but these requests were turned down.



The German invasion force for Operation 'Taifun' was split into five groups, each named after its commander. In the absence of Hauptmann Kuhlmann, the Küstenjäger force was under the command of Leutnant Hans Schädlich.

Two Pionierlandungsboote of Gruppe von Saldern, covered by the destroyer *TA17*, pictured as they return with wounded on the morning of November 12 after their landings in Grifo Bay.

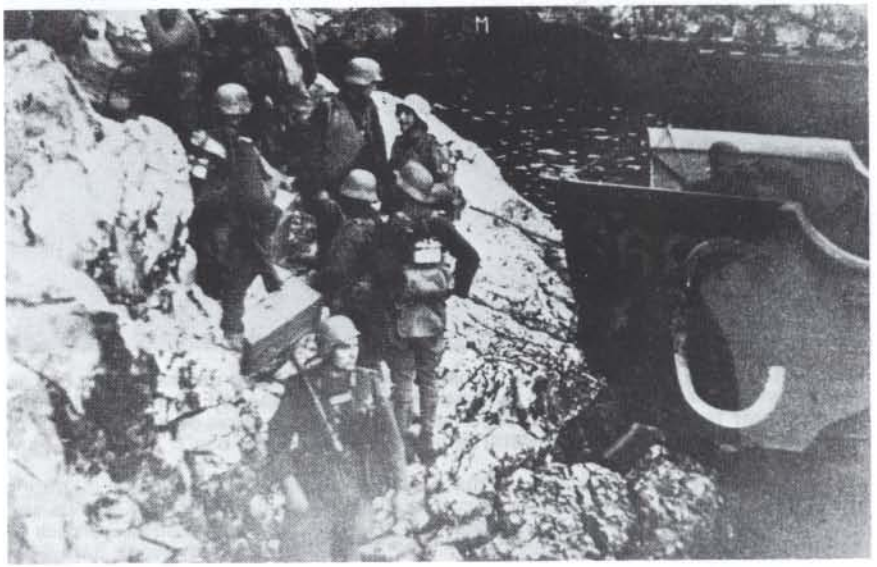
THE LANDING

On November 10, Generalleutnant Müller and Korvettenkapitän Günther Brandt of the 21. U-Jagd-Flottille, the naval commander of the invasion fleet, confirmed that the landings would take place two days hence. When air reconnaissance on the evening of the 11th revealed British destroyers in Mandalya Bay, Brandt recommended postponing the operation by 24 hours, but Müller disagreed and the operation went ahead as planned.

On the 12th, the British 8th Destroyer Flotilla shelled Kos harbour with *Faulknor*, *Pindos* and *Beaufort*, and Kalymnos with *Petard*, *Rockwood* and *Krakowiak*. In all, 1,500 rounds were poured into Kalymnos albeit without visible effect. *Rockwood* was hit by an unexploded glider bomb. In order to conserve his fuel, the commander of the flotilla decided to send only *Pindos* and *Beaufort* to intercept reported landing craft, but, fortunately for the Germans, these ships made no contact.

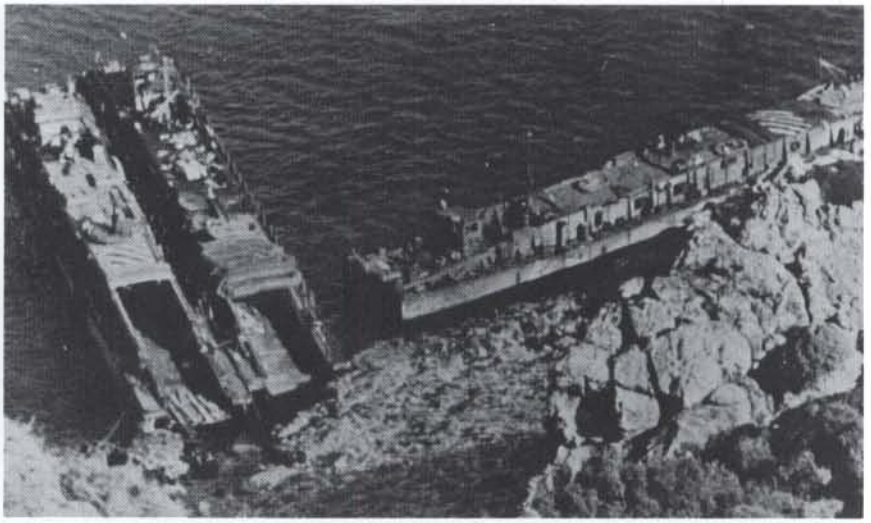
The departure of the landing fleet was delayed by one hour when two destroyers were spotted between Kos and Kalymnos. Then it put to sea, with one force east of Kalymnos making for the beaches on the east coast of Leros, while the other headed west. The eastern force, with Gruppen Schädlich, von Saldern and Doerr, and comprising two ferry lighters, nine Pionierlandungsboote, two I-Boats, and three assault boats, assembled in Isolavecchia Bay on Kalymnos and had three clashes with enemy naval forces. The two escorting motor minesweepers first attacked the British *ML 456* which withdrew to Alinda Bay, and later Italian motor torpedo boats. This delayed the landing by another two hours. Then the two German destroyers *TA17* and *TA19* covering the eastern flank had a short engagement with *MTB 307*.

The eastern landing force then split into three sections which headed for Appetici, Grifo and Palma. Gruppe Schädlich, with the Küstenjäger company made a rapid assault on Appetici, lit by searchlights, in the face of heavy shelling from the now-alerted Italian batteries. The two faster assault boats were able to reach the shore and escape, but both engines suddenly failed on one of the two I-Boats. With shells coming nearer and nearer, the crew managed to restart one engine and gain the beach. The troops were already ashore when a shell hit and exploded the ammunition on board.

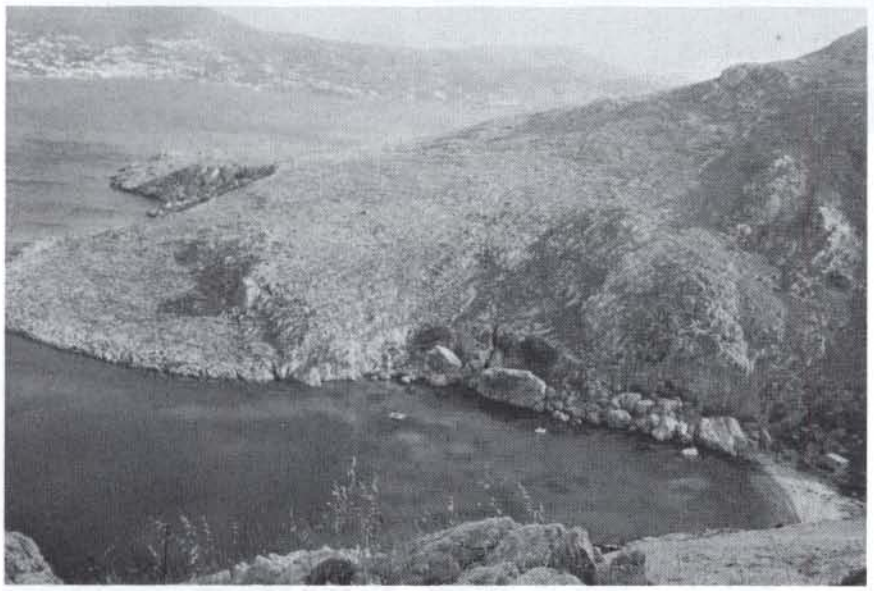


0630 hours. 'Landung im Griffo-Bucht' on the morning of November 12.

Further north, the left flotilla of Gruppe von Saldern managed to reach Grifo Bay at 0630, just as dawn was breaking, with four Pionierlandungsboote when they were attacked by fire from *MAS 555* and *559* which lay at anchor in the bay. The landing craft returned the fire with their 2cm Flak and captured the MTBs. The crew of *MAS 555* was forced to take German troops to Santa Marina (Agia Marina). On the way, the fire from the Italian batteries became so fierce that the boat had to be beached at Mount Appetici. A crewman of *MAS 559* managed to sink the boat the following day. Although the German landing craft tried to return to Kalymnos, they received such a heavy pounding from the Leros batteries that they had to retreat instead to the shelter of Grifo Bay. The right column of Gruppe von Saldern was also subjected to heavy fire during its approach and lost one Pionierlandungsboot before one ferry lighter and three Pionierlandungsboote reached their two beaches north of Grifo Bay.



Ferry lighters of Gruppe von Saldern in the Grifo Bay area.



With Grifo Bay in the foreground, we are looking southward across Alinda Bay to Leros town at the foot of Mount Appetici. It was just to the left of the raft that the Italian motor torpedo boat *MAS 559* was scuttled by its crew on the morning of November 13. Pieces of wreckage still lie on the bottom of the bay.

Gruppe Doerr encountered accurate fire approaching Palma Bay and after the ferry lighter received a direct hit it returned with the accompanying Pionierlandungsboot.

The western landing force, Gruppe Aschoff, on board three ferry lighters and four I-Boats, was delayed on its approach by the small British minesweeper *BMYS 72*. The leading German motor minesweepers called to the British vessel that they were Italian craft and that she was to follow them, leading her into a trap. *UJ 2101* and *UJ 2102* came alongside and boarded the vessel, capturing all signals books. Thereupon *UJ 2102* towed the vessel to Kalymnos. However, this engagement was so timeconsuming that it was daylight before the assault took place. Consequently, the force came under heavy fire while still five miles off Leros, at which point the naval commander decided to withdraw. General Müller ordered another attempt to be made after Stuka attacks had softened up the batteries, but the heavy fire forced it to retire again. Müller wanted the western force to land in any case, and, after arguing the point with Brandt, who wanted to wait for nightfall, he ordered the landing to take place immediately with the support of the destroyers. Brandt then landed alongside *TA17* in an Arado floatplane to discuss the situation with Fregattenkapitän Walter Riede, commander of the 9. Torpedoboot-Flottille. *TA14* and *TA15*, which headed the force and were to give covering fire and a smoke-screen for the landing, were delayed and did not arrive until 0852. At 1213, the destroyers were straddled by shells from three batteries before these came within range of their own guns and, after splinter damage was suffered on both ships, Riede broke off the landing and escorted the fleet back to Kalymnos.

Ashore, Peter found more tangible remains of the landing. Although Grifo Bay is a sheltered cove with a nice sandy beach, visitors should beware; mortar bombs still lie scattered in crevacies.

This carrying case for German stick grenades was also found nearby. Because of the precipitous nature of this part of the coast, the beach had been left undefended, enabling the group to come ashore unopposed.

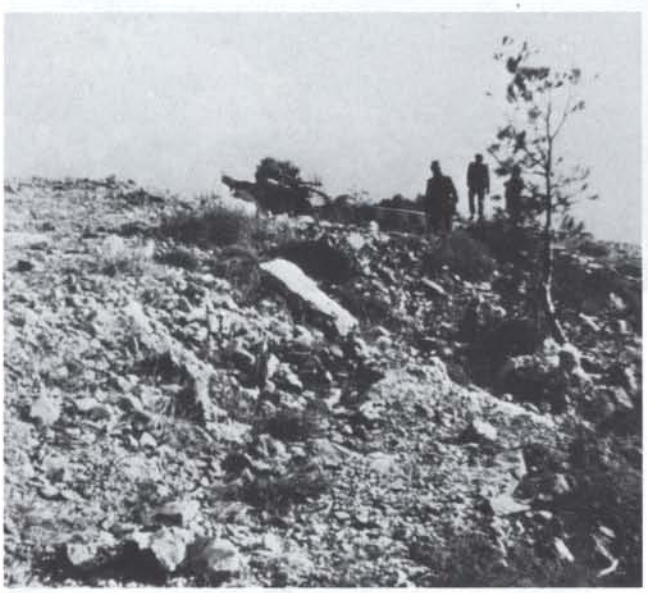
The Luftwaffe had virtual air superiority and on the 12th alone, bombers flew 122 sorties against Leros and dive-bombers 48. The following day sorties totalled 166; even more the next day, culminating with 261 on the 15th. *Right:* **Portolago undergoes a bombing attack.** *Below right:* **Peter established that the shot had been taken from Mount Appetici — the goal of the Küstenjäger.**

Instead of at the scheduled time of 0430, the Küstenjäger did not reach the eastern side of Mount Appetici until 0615. Although at first its ascent was unopposed, they soon came under small-arms fire from the Italian crew of Battery Lago. Sotto Tenante Corrado Spagnolo, second in command of the battery, led the defence and was mortally wounded later that day. A Navy platoon from Leros Castle under Tenente di Vascello 'Ercole' Rocchi came to their assistance. At 0700, Stukas attacked the Italian battery, but one bomb hit the Germans' own positions, killing four Küstenjäger. By 0830, two of the four gun emplacements had been taken. The two remaining guns kept firing, aimed personally by the battery commander, Capitano Artigliera E. Nasti.

The Royal Irish Fusiliers battalion reserve — C Company — was ordered to counter-attack and did so at about 1100, eventually retaking the battery area. However, save for one platoon, C Company was withdrawn at 1830 and, although this strange order was later countermanded, it took until dawn before all the platoons had been moved back to the hill. Meanwhile, the Küstenjäger had been reinforced by a Pionierlandungsboot containing men from III./Gren.Rgt. 440 who had failed to land at Palma. The Küstenjäger then renewed their attack and took Appetici during the morning.

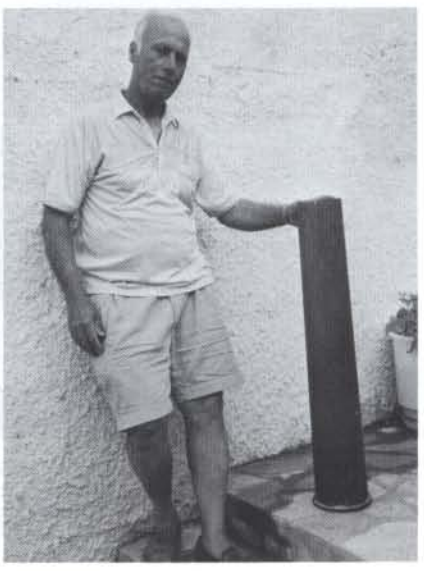
The Küstenjäger — seen *(above right)* **during their passage from Brindisi to Greece — were to land on the steep rocky foreshore** *(right)* **at the foot of Mount Appetici; fight their way up the mountain, and silence Battery Lago on its summit.** *Above:* **In this German reconnaissance picture, Leros town is in the centre with Portolago on the bay of the same name on the far side of the island. In the event, the actual touchdown position was just to the right of the arrow.**

Left: An MG troop of the Küstenjäger on their way to the top. *Right:* A feint outline in the background of the original print indicates that the photo was taken on the eastern face of Mount Appetici.



Despite delays, within a few hours of the landings, the two lower guns, Nos. 3 and 4, had fallen into German hands.

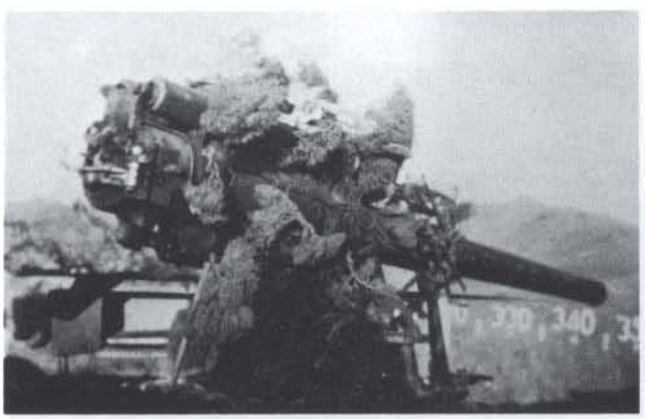
A comparison of these two positions is difficult today as both were almost completely destroyed after the war.



The four guns were 120mm calibre — more or less 5-inch — and Tassos Kanaris, who was an eyewitness to the battle, secured one of Lago's shell cases for the museum he proposes to establish at Platanos.

Although the lower guns had fallen, the other two higher up continued to fire under the personal control of Capitano Artigliera Nasti. The Royal Irish Fusiliers counter-attacked and won a brief respite but the Küstenjäger, now reinforced by men from Gruppe Doerr, which had been forced to abort its planned landing in Palma Bay, retook the position later that morning. *Above:* The battery command post on the summit pictured from the No. 1 gun position — then and now.

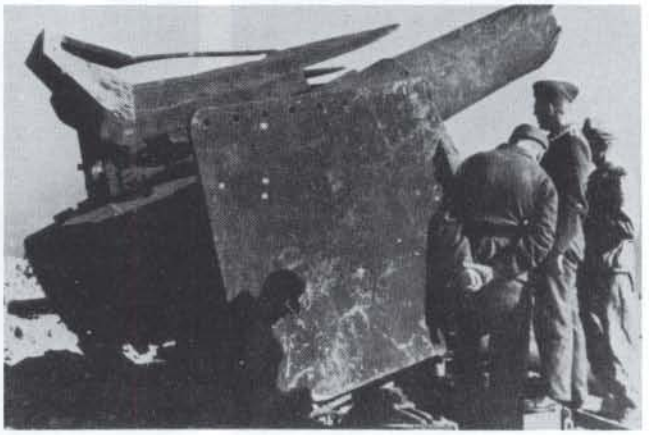
Above: The interior of the command post today with its compass rose and degree markings still visible. When Battery Lago was captured, the Italian garrison were imprisoned in their own barracks *(above right)* until the fighting was over. Inscriptions are still visible on the building including '18 Novembre' (presumably added after the war) on the exterior, and a German slogan *(right)* inside which translates: 'It is completely unimportant if we live but it is necessary that our people, that Germany lives!'



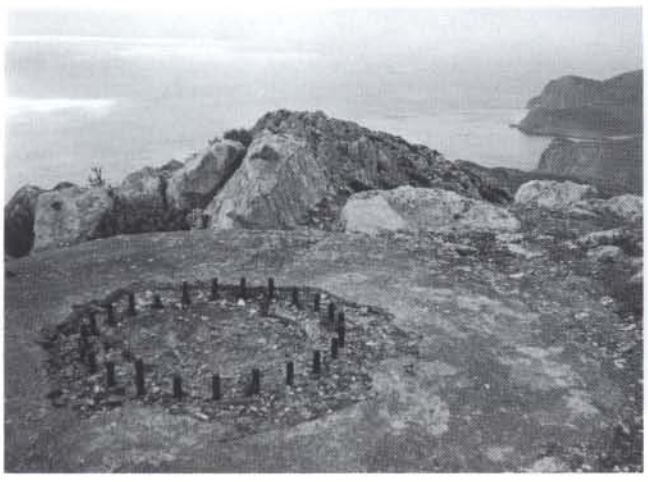
All the guns were removed by the British occupying force after the war as part of the demilitarisation process demanded by Turkey before the islands were given to Greece. *Left:* In this case, the concrete emplacement was left virtually intact *(right)*.

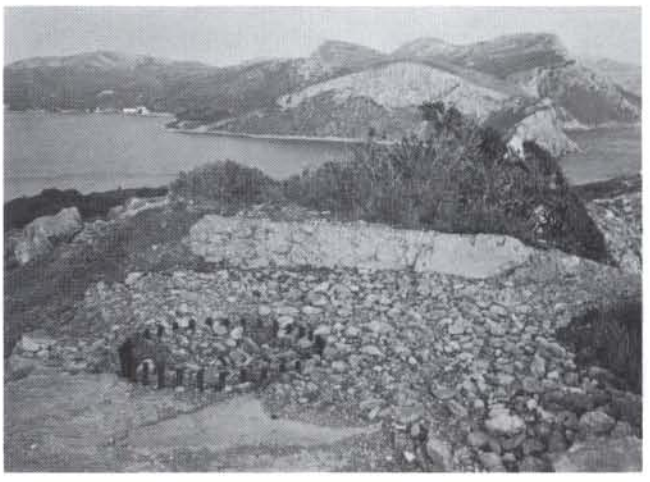
After their unopposed landing in Grifo Bay, the men of the II. Batallion of Luftwaffen-Jäger-Regiment 22 climbed Mount Clidi and assaulted the 152mm Battery Ciano on its summit. A Stuka attack knocked out two of the guns, the other two being spiked before the position was overrun during the late afternoon in spite of the efforts of C Company of the 1st Battalion of the King's Own Royal Regiment.

Further north, Gruppe von Saldern had made good progress after landing and, at 0900, Brigadier Tilney had to order C Company of the King's Own, the fortress reserve under Major W. P. T. Tilley, to defend Mount Clidi. This was the highest mountain in the middle part of the island which commanded Alinda Bay and the north-east part of Leros. Nevertheless, Battery Ciano on its summit was taken by 1700 hours by 7./Luftwaffen-Jäger-Regiment 22 and the British thrown back to the Italian barracks on the western slope. Two of Ciano's guns had been destroyed by Stukas and the others were blown up during the retreat.



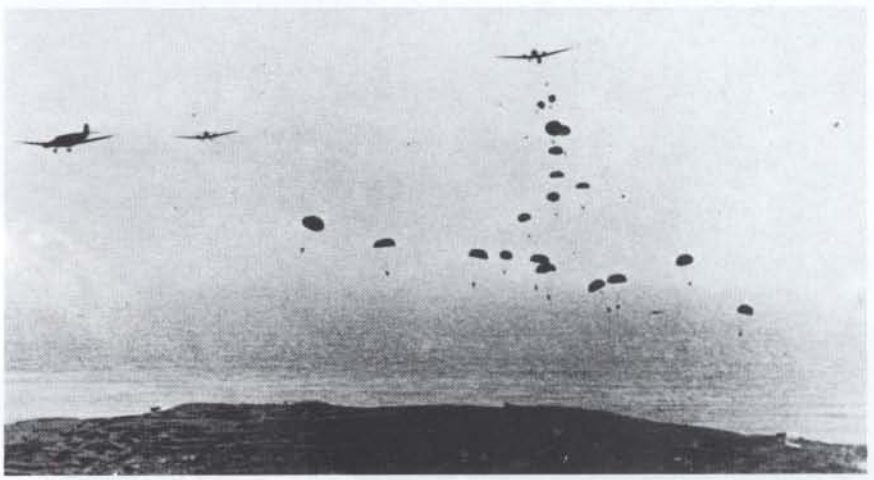
Unfortunately, the battery site is now a restricted military area and is off limits for photography but the barracks building *(right)* **on the western slope to which C Company retreated, must still appear much as it looked in 1943. However, both the other 152mm batteries on Leros — or what is left of them — can still be seen.** *Below left:* **Battery San Giorgio on Mount Scumbarda at the extreme south-western corner of the island.** *Below right:* **Battery Ducci on Mount Cazzuni, defending the entrance to Portolago Bay, which played its part in repelling the approach of Gruppe Aschoff. As a result, the II. Bataillon of Grenadier-Regiment 16 was diverted to reinforce the eastern task force.**





The fifth attack force, the 40 Ju 52s containing the paratroops of I. Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 2 under Hauptmann Martin Kühne, had to be recalled in the morning because the situation was unclear, but hardly had they landed back at Athens-Tatoi and two other airfields than they took off again. By 1300 hours, the aircraft were approaching Gurna Bay at wave-top height. Climbing to 400 feet, they approached in line ahead and dropped their parachutists over Rachi Ridge, the narrow neck between Gurna and Alinda Bays. One of the Ju 52s was shot down, the Fallschirmjägers suffering severe losses during their descent under heavy fire. However, the British troops in the immediate neighbourhood were so few that the parachute troops were soon able to form up and beat off opposition provided by B Company of the Royal West Kents, platoons of the 'Buffs' from Mount Quirico (Agia Kyrikos) and platoons of the 'Faughs' from Mount Germano. With Stuka assistance, the two 'Faughs' platoons were easily mopped up. Mount Rachi was taken and the island cut in two.

The 'Brandenburger' paratroops board their Ju 52s at Athens. After a false start, the I. Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 2, commanded by Hauptmann Martin Kühne, went in during the afternoon.



As seen today from a vantage point looking south from Mount Quirico with Alinda Bay on the left, the drop-zone was located in the valley between Mount Rachi in the centre and Mount Germano in front of Gurna Bay on the right. Although the 470 paratroops suffered 62 dead and 100 wounded, the drop, right on the narrow neck in the centre of Leros, split the island in two. The fate of the British defenders was sealed when the Germans seized the northern part of the vital Rachi Ridge.

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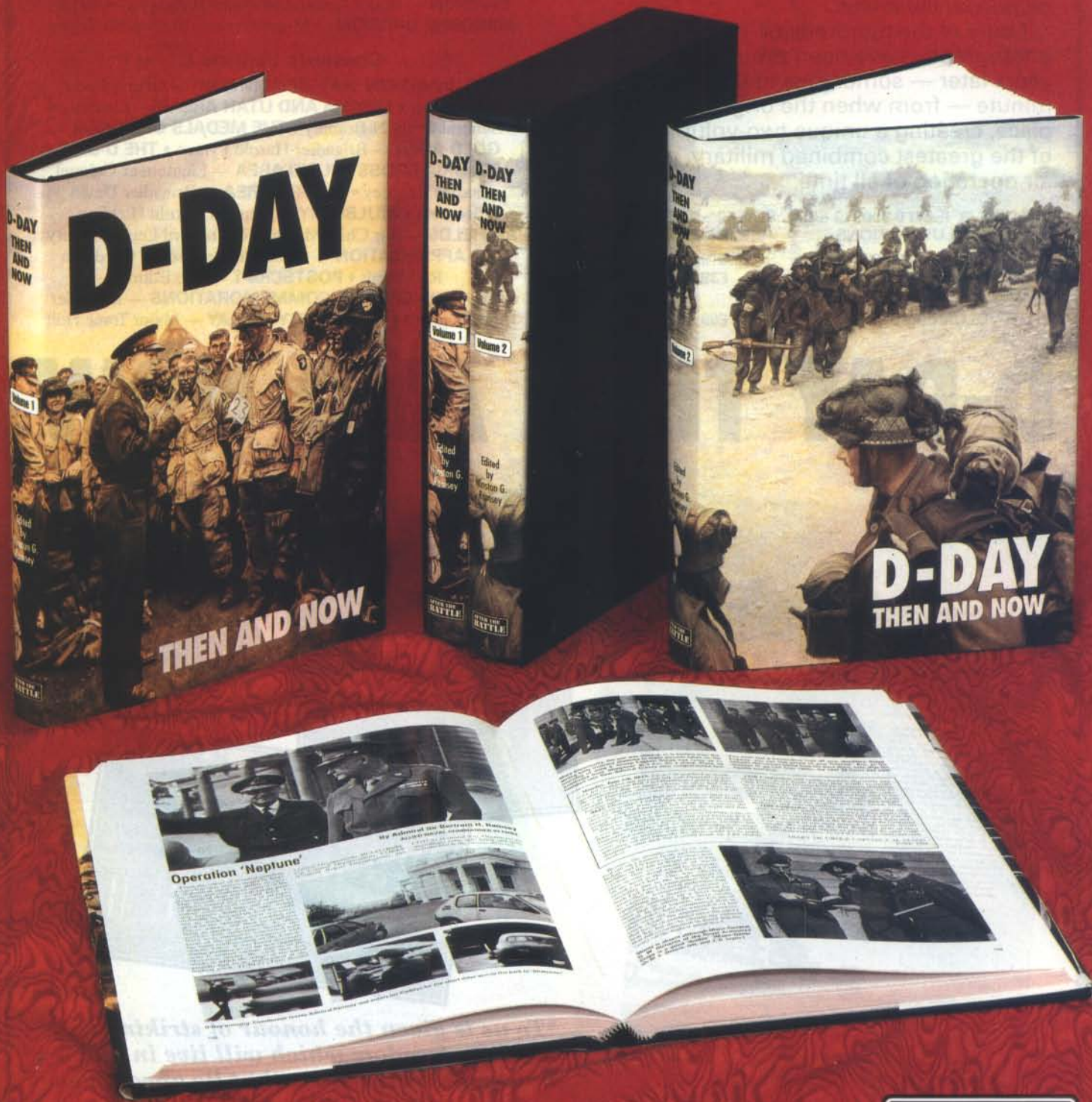
‘ People of Western Europe. A landing was made this morning on the coast of France . . .’

GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force



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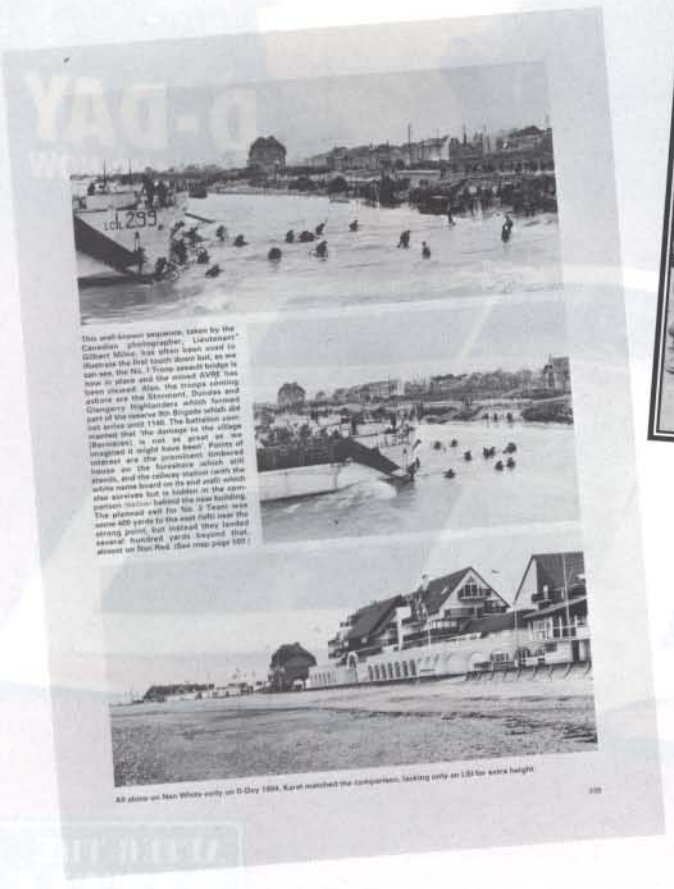

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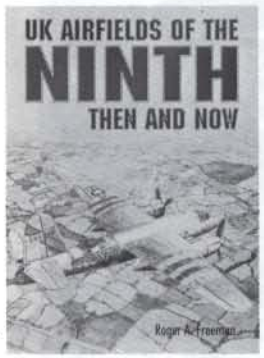

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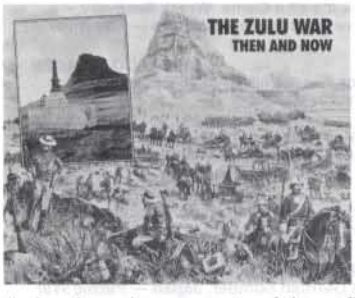

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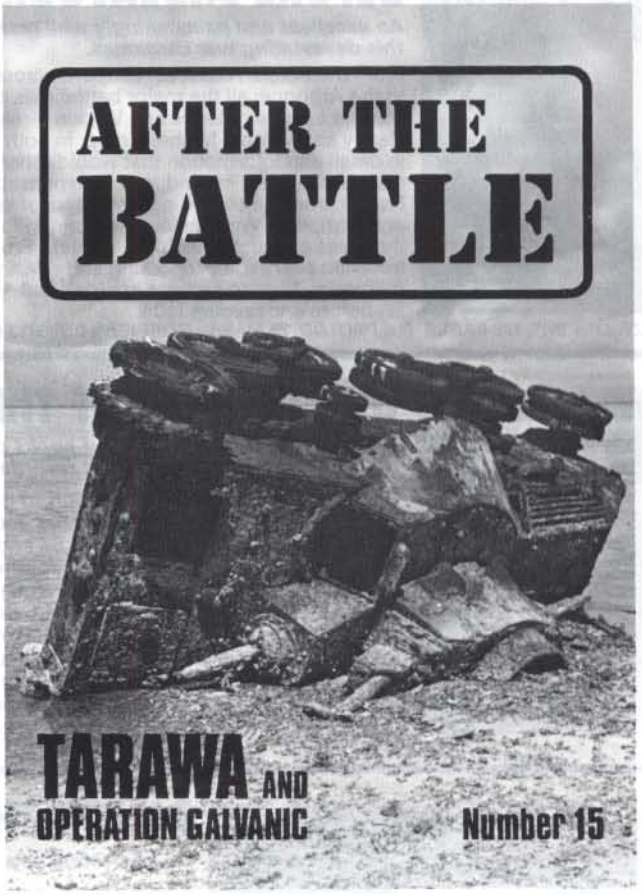

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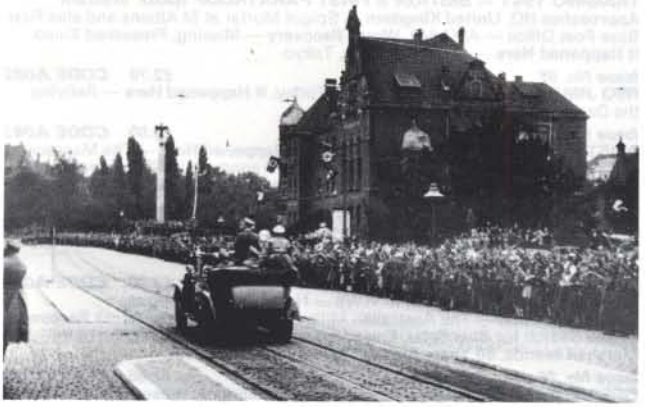

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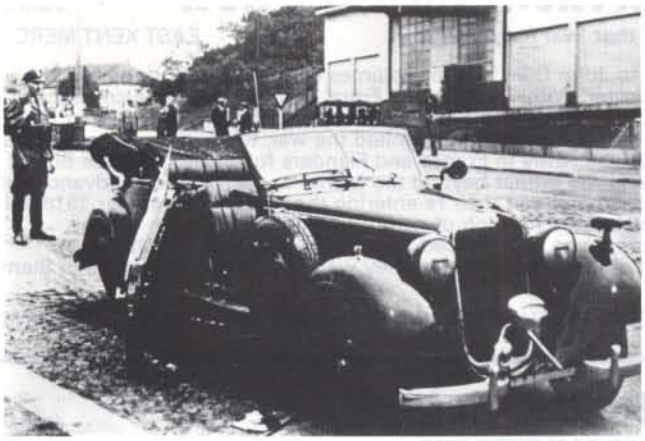
Britain's invasion defences were covered in an article in issue No. 14. This obstruction once blocked the A24 near Findon in Sussex.



The assassination of the chief of the German security police, Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, was investigated on the streets of Prague where it actually happened. You can read the full story in issue 24.

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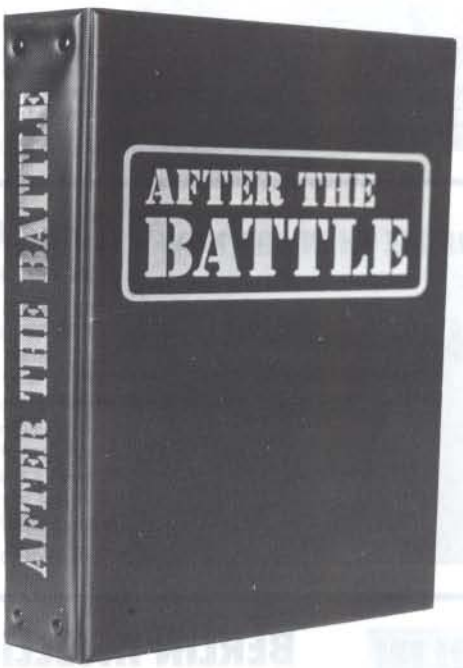

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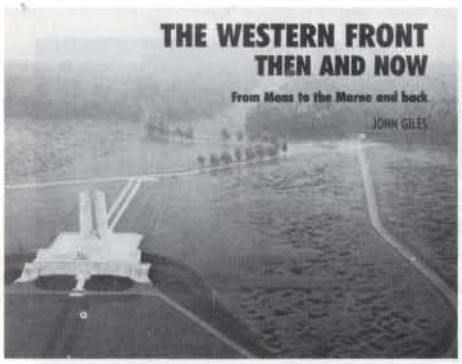

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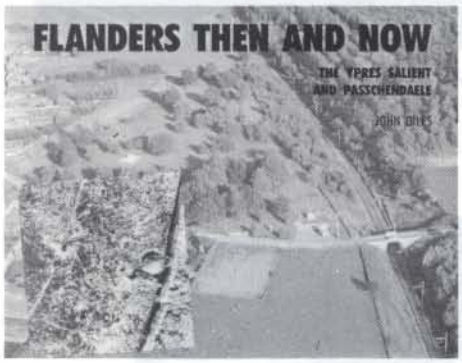

FLANDERS THEN AND NOW

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Eye-witness accounts of the bitter fighting are blended with contemporary photographs and comparison pictures taken by the author of the same spots today. The result is a salute to all those men who marched along the roads of Picardy, from Amiens and the surrounding camps, through the ruined town of Albert and onwards to the trenches of the Somme battleground. Sadly for so many of them, there was no return.

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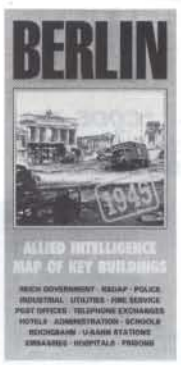
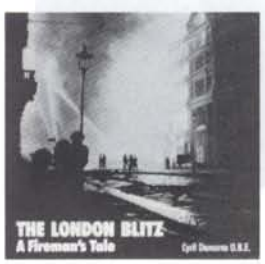


BERLIN INTELLIGENCE MAP

Published specially by ***After the Battle*** to coincide with the suspension of Allied occupation rights in Berlin in October 1990, this map was produced in 1944 by the War Office and lists the location and use of all important buildings in Berlin to be used in the occupation of the city. Every building associated with the Reich Government, NSDAP, police, fire service, Reichsbahn, U-Bahn, hospitals, telephone exchanges, embassies, prisons, etc., is numbered and referenced to an index printed on the reverse of the map. This sheet covers the central area at 1:12500. **£1.75** ***CODE F021***



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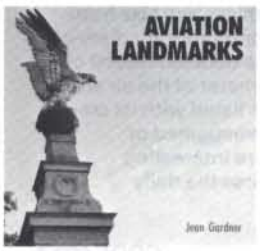

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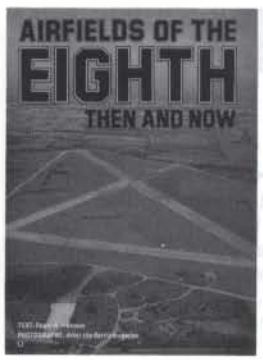

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MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS

First published to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, *After the Battle* ploughed an entirely fresh furrow across this legendary field of human conflict to produce a book which has now come to be regarded as a memorial in itself to 'The Few'. Never before has such detailed coverage been given to the losses of either the Royal Air Force or the Luftwaffe. The graves of RAF aircrew that were killed have been listed, visited by the editorial team and photographed as a complete and lasting record of those that died. The pilots, their memorials, crashes and crash sites, and the aircraft that have survived are profusely illustrated. Twenty of the most famous fighter aerodromes have been explored and described as they were at the time and as they are today. Also included is a complete listing of 'The Few' — more than twenty-five years' work by the late John Holloway.

The 16-page introductions to the Mk III/IV and Mk IV editions are available separately if required.

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Tony Le Tissier

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Using 'then and now' photographs we look at Berlin throughout its many phases. The turbulent years of the Weimar Republic, when Communist and Nazi fought each other for control of the streets, led to the Third Reich with its spectacular scenes of grandeur and glory. However, the 'Thousand Year Reich', and the architectural megalomania it spawned which transformed the centre of Berlin, began to crumble within ten years as the Western Allies dealt out massive retribution from the air. The Soviet land attack which followed finally ground much of what was left of the city into dust. Berlin's position as the focal point of the Cold War in Europe is examined, culminating in 1961 with the fateful division of the city by 'the Wall' which split Berlin into two camps — East and West — for nearly three decades, leaving Berlin an island within a hostile sea. Finally, the story comes full circle with our description of the unbelievable events of 1989-90.

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Bart Vanderveen

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BRITISH ARMY REVIEW

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BATTLE OF THE BULGE THEN AND NOW

Jean Paul Pallud

The remarkable impartiality of Mr Pallud's calm, measured reportage gives the reader confidence that the narrative is as free from distortion as any account can be . . . intricate . . . majestic . . . a dauntingly massive book.
THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Nine days before Christmas 1944 Hitler played Germany's last card on which he staked everything to turn the tables in the West. This is the first time that an attempt has been made to cover the entire salient in order to present the battle in our familiar 'then and now' format. Hundreds of miles have been travelled by the author throughout every corner of the battlefield to search out the scenes of past events — every known photograph belonging to combatants, civilians, and in public collections and private sources has been sought or considered. all the cine film has been examined frame by frame and certain sequences illustrated and analysed. In this way a number of classic pictures almost always used — or misused — in depicting the Ardennes battle are not only placed in their context in the German advance but are also shown to be not always quite what they seem!

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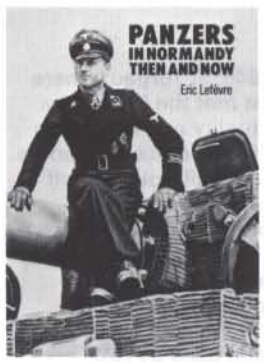

PANZERS IN NORMANDY THEN AND NOW

Eric Lefèvre

This is a truly magnificent record of the performance of the German tanks and their Panzertruppen in the Normandy Campaign.
BRITISH ARMY REVIEW

Published to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Normandy campaign, *Panzers in Normandy Then and Now* is a detailed study of the German panzer regiments in Normandy in 1944 as seen from the German side. The book is basically divided into two parts: the theoretical composition of the 1944 model of the panzer regiment, its equipment and personnel, and secondly, individual chapters on the seventeen panzer units which saw service in Normandy. In addition the book contrasts the scenes of the fighting that raged in the countryside and villages of this part of France with comparison photographs of the battleground as it is today. Research for this book also resulted in the discovery of the location of the grave of the most famous panzer commander, formerly listed as missing in action, when a Normandy roadside revealed its secret in 1983 as the last resting place of the victor of Villiers-Bocage, Michael Wittmann.

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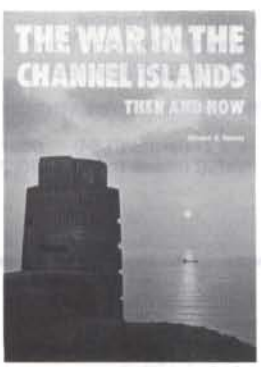

WAR IN THE CHANNEL ISLANDS THEN AND NOW

Winston G. Ramsey

The most comprehensively illustrated book about the German Occupation of the Channel Islands.
JERSEY EVENING POST

Besides being the only British territory occupied by the Germans in the Second World War, it is perhaps less generally known that the Channel Islands were fortified out of all proportion to the rest of Hitler's Atlantic Wall: a legacy that is explored in individual chapters on Alderney, Guernsey, Jersey and Sark. First-hand accounts of all seven Commando raids are brought together for the first time. A summary of how the Islands' hotels were put to use by their German guests may intrigue present-day visitors, and a review of the war museums gives an insight into the variety of relics that enthusiasts have had the foresight to preserve. The war cemeteries are described, and there is a list of every grave of both sides of the two World Wars. Annotated aerial photographs form an important aspect of the book — among them unique pictures of Sark for which exceptional permission was granted to enter the island's inviolable airspace.

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EPPING FOREST THEN AND NOW

Winston G. Ramsey with Reginald L. Fowkes

A magnificent new book.
WEST ESSEX GAZETTE

Never before has a book portrayed the historic Epping Forest area of Great Britain in this way: through hundreds of 'then and now' comparisons, recording the changing scene since the earliest days of photography. From Forest Gate in the south to Epping in the north; from Chigwell and Abridge in the east through Chingford to the great abbey of Waltham in the west, a wide-ranging pot-pourri of contemporary extracts has been blended with more than 1,400 photographs, drawings and maps, together with specially-taken aerial photographs, to trace the events and developments which have shaped the locality. The illustrations being combined with a text researched mainly from newspapers, magazine articles and books of the time, *Epping Forest Then and Now* provides a fascinating contemporary record that brings to life the local and social history of the area and does so with a due sense of the past to set beside the present.

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WOODFORD THEN AND NOW

Reginald L. Fowkes

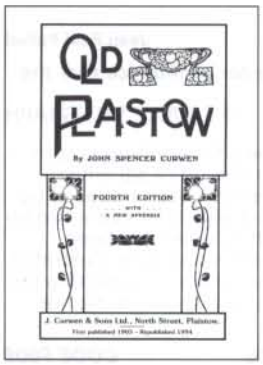
A most impressive publication

ESSEX RECORD OFFICE

In selecting past photographs from a collection formed since the beginning of the century, Reginald L. Fowkes has compiled a 'then and now' pictorial record depicting the contrasting character of Woodford, Essex, over a period which spans almost eighty years. Accompanying the photographs, the history of Woodford is told from the beginning of the thirteenth century.

For Woodfordians whose memories encompass the early part of the century, this book, which set a new standard for local histories when it first appeared in 1981, will stir recollections of a leafy, almost leisurely suburb in a semi-rural setting. There are views, though, which still remain virtually as they were then — an intrinsic part of the contrast with Woodford as it is now and a timeless element in the intervening years, recorded for posterity in this book along with those scenes, streets and buildings that are no more.

SIZE 12"×8½" 192 PAGES 460 ILLUSTRATIONS ISBN 0 900913 47 9 **£17.95** ***CODE F012***



OLD PLAISTOW

John Spencer Curwen

This delightfully quaint and nostalgic local history is the work of Spencer Curwen — the eldest son of the Revd. John Curwen, founder of the Tonic Sol-fa Movement and of the Curwen Press — for twenty years he was minister of the Plaistow Congregational Church in West Ham.

Spencer was born and brought up in Plaistow when it was still a large village. He was the founder of the Stratford Music Festival in 1882, which still organises its annual competitions, and was active in liberal politics and social affairs in south West Ham.

This publication originated in a paper read at Balaam Street Schools, Plaistow, in 1891. It aroused such interest that it was printed by the Press and went through three editions in about two years, becoming somewhat of a local classic of the period. This fourth edition, produced over ten years later in 1905, was enlarged and brought up to date. It vividly recalls a Plaistow which, during more than forty years of incumbency by one vicar, saw the marsh pasture in the south of the parish transformed into an urban landscape covered by railways, docks, factories and terraced housing.

SIZE 8½"×5½" 92 PAGES 50 ILLUSTRATIONS ISBN 0 900913 87 8 **£4.95** ***CODE F033***

AFTER THE BATTLE BOUND VOLUME 22

A major feature in this volume is the link-up between East and West in April 1945: at Torgau, where American and Soviet forces joined hands, and at Wismar where the British first met the Red Army.

The escapes from Sagan's Stalag Luft 3 in Lower Silesia are portrayed in actuality and in the film recreations, *The Wooden Horse* and *The Great Escape*. The escape of some 76 RAF officer prisoners and the subsequent murder of 50 of their number by the Gestapo is covered in detail, rounded off with a 50th anniversary pilgrimage to the camp site by seven of the original escapers.

The little-known aircraft accident which took the life of the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, in January 1945 is described using unique stills from cine film taken at the time. Another tragic death covered in this volume is that of Violette Szabo, posthumously awarded the George Cross for her exploits in France while serving with the Special Operations Executive, and epitomised in the film, *Carve Her Name with Pride*.

Other important features cover the various air headquarters at High Wycombe used by RAF Bomber Command and the US Eighth Air Force; the capture of Boulogne in Operation 'Wellhit'; the executions of US military offenders in Normandy; and the battle for Merksem.

The preservation of military artifacts in the Pacific; the conservation of American wall art in Britain; the initiative by one Australian to commemorate notable battlefields; the recovery of a Spitfire in Scotland and the 50th anniversary 'Corridor Tour' to commemorate Operation 'Market Garden' in Holland, round off this, the 22nd bound volume in the *After the Battle* series.

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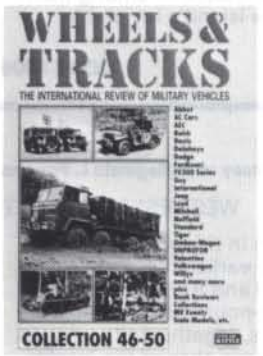

WHEELS & TRACKS COLLECTION 46-50

This bound volume — our 10th — contains *Wheels & Tracks* issues 46-50. In addition to its 280 pages it features a comprehensive index with three categories of references. About 1,350 illustrations are included, with few exceptions not published before. Major articles on wheeled vehicles include Standard Light Utilities, the rare 3×2 Davies from California, French Delahaye MVs of all shapes and sizes (from 1910 till the 1950s), Dodge T214-WC55 37-mm gun carriages and the whole range of International 2½-ton six-wheelers. Anglo-American Ford(son) 6×2 and 6×4 trucks are dealt with and so are Mitchell cars, the elusive Nuffield-converted Willys MB and a surviving Buick Wehrmacht Umbauwagen. Hard-skin machines include the AC armoured car prototype of WWI and the whole range of British Armoured Command Vehicles (notably the AEC 4×4 and 6×6). Moving to tracked vehicles there is the Loyd Carrier in its many guises, the FV300 series of experiments and the King Tiger in Fort Knox. The period of the mid-1990s naturally resulted in extensive coverage of 50th anniversary events like Normandy in 1994. In addition there are lots of pictures from across the world, the popular Readers' Forum, Discoveries, Identifile, Before and After, Collections and Scale Models. *Wheels & Tracks* is invaluable for the international MV preservation movement but also of importance to those who are involved primarily with commercial vehicles.

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A complete index covering issues 1–25 of *Wheels & Tracks* is available price **£2.95** ***EA01***

WHEELS & TRACKS *What our readers say . . .*

***Wheels & Tracks** is my only contact with other enthusiasts and every issue I receive gives great encouragement and is also very informative.*

MICHAEL KELLY
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Many thanks for a great magazine.

RORY McCAUGHAN
PIGGS PEAK, SWAZILAND

Thanks for the great magazine — I always look forward to its arrival.

MARK NEITENBACH
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*I now have almost the full set of **Wheels & Tracks**. Thank you for such an interesting and varied series of articles.*

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*After discovering **Wheels & Tracks** by chance, in the Bovington Tank Museum, I have bought all the back issues and continue to subscribe. I enjoy this magazine very much and I am looking forward to the next issue all the time.*

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WHEELS & TRACKS is produced under the editorship of Bart Vanderveen, author of many publications on military vehicles, including the Historic Military Vehicles Directory, and is published by After the Battle magazine. The vehicles featured, and the stories behind them, span the whole period of recent history right up to the present day. Both wheeled and tracked . . . at war . . . in operational service and civilian rôles . . . preservation and restoration . . . prototypes and developments. There is no other magazine like Wheels & Tracks: its scope is international.
WHEELS & TRACKS is published quarterly on the 15th January, April, July and October. All back issues are available — contents list guide is shown below.

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AFTER THE BATTLE VIDEO COLLECTION

VIDEOCASSETTE 1* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV01*

Memphis Belle

Memphis Belle is generally considered one of the best action documentaries produced during the Second World War. Although created by a distinguished Hollywood producer, William Wyler, it contains no studio simulations of battle and for this relies entirely on sequences filmed during Eighth Air Force bombing raids over hostile territory. Purporting to depict the twenty-fifth mission of one B-17 of the 91st Bomb Group, this storyline only developed late in the production resulting in much extraneous footage already shot being included as fully described in the Viewing Notes. Complete uncut version including the sequences describing the operational plan deleted on the BBC TV showing.
COLOUR 38 MINUTES

Fight for the Sky

Made primarily for the historical instruction of USAAF trainees, *Fight for the Sky* represents the best composite record of camera gun shots filmed by Eighth Air Force fighters during the war. Air fighting sequences are followed by the strafing of road and rail targets and the low-level shooting up of enemy airfields — and even a Lancaster!
BLACK AND WHITE 20 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 2* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV02*

Thunderbolt

Thunderbolt is undoubtedly the best Second World War documentary made about USAAF fighter pilots and their operations. Produced and edited by William Wyler as a follow-up to *Memphis Belle* (on USAAF bomber operations), the action is centred around the 65th Fighter Squadron, 57th FG, based at Alto, Corsica. The film highlights the bombing and strafing attacks on Operation 'Strangle' — the campaign against enemy road, rail and water communications in northern Italy.
COLOUR 40 MINUTES

Desert Bonanza

Desert Bonanza features the huge USAF military aircraft storage base at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base located near Tucson in the moisture-free Arizona desert, where aircraft are preserved from WWII, Korea and South-East Asia for future use or cannibalisation.
COLOUR 15 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 3* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV03*

Battle for San Pietro

Major John Huston's renowned documentary on the battle for this small Italian village in 1943 caused a furore in US Army circles when it was previewed by the top brass. The GI's war — the living and the dead — was filmed in such stark reality that the film was only finally released for public viewing after heavy editing down to thirty minutes which changed its whole theme form 'anti' to 'pro'-war. This version retains much of the original material excised or altered by Army censors.
BLACK AND WHITE 36 MINUTES

The Enemy Strikes

Much captured German film taken in December 1944 is included in this American propaganda account of the Battle of the Bulge. The Viewing Notes give the background to this material and explain how seeing is not always believing.
BLACK AND WHITE 10 MINUTES

Rolling to the Rhine

The Red Ball Express — the one-way, twenty-four-hour truck route across France carried over 400,000 tons of freight during its eighty-one days of existence in 1944. An equally important side of the war in Europe is illustrated in this short, made for the American public.
BLACK AND WHITE 9 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 4* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV04*

Ploesti

This is one of the *Air Force Story* series made as a public relations venture by the USAAF to 'sell' air power to the American public. It was made as a tribute to the Fifteenth Air Force whose units carried out the raids but, as the Viewing Notes explain, much of the fine and genuine combat photography frequently depicts Eighth Air Force aircraft.
BLACK AND WHITE 13 MINUTES

Mayday! Mayday!

Made at the end of hostilities by the USAAF, this film relates the methods used for Air Sea Rescue by the Eighth Air Force from the airfields at Boxted, in Essex, and Halesworth, Suffolk. Simulated rescue missions are depicted illustrating this little-known activity of the USAAF in the United Kingdom.
BLACK AND WHITE 17 MINUTES

Schweinfurt and Regensburg

Another title in the *Air Force Story* series centred around the mission of August 17, 1943 to hit at industrial targets vital to the German war effort. Clever editing incorporates much footage from later operations, especially of the 303rd Bomb Group B-17Gs from Molesworth, Huntingdonshire.
BLACK AND WHITE 13 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 5* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV05*

D-Day Minus One

This film, produced as an Army Air Forces special project, covers the operations of the 82nd and 101st US Airborne Divisions and the IX Troop Carrier Command in the early hours of June 6, 1944, and highlights the rôle of the airborne infantry and glidermen in the invasion of Normandy.
BLACK AND WHITE 16 MINUTES

The Autobiography of a Jeep

This amusing yet informative short describes the birth of the Jeep as told by itself with some spectacular off-road shots. One Jeep was produced every two minutes and they served in every theatre of war as the 'army's mule on wheels'.
BLACK AND WHITE 9 MINUTES

D-Day Convoy

Straightforward documentary produced by the United States Army (and thus angled to the American sphere of operations) on the Normandy Invasion — from training and build-up to touch down. The rôles of the air, sea and land forces are described using footage taken of the assaults on Omaha, Utah and Pointe du Hoc.
BLACK AND WHITE 17 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 6* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV06*

Fury in the Pacific

One of the most savage of the Pacific battles in Admiral William Halsey's 'island-hopping' campaign was the landing on Pelelieu, one of the Palau Islands in the Japanese-held Carolines. Despite a formidable pre-invasion bombardment, the 1st Marine Division suffered heavy casualties on the first day, rooting out the defenders from a warren of caves with flame-throwers and grenades. One combat cameraman was killed and nine wounded taking these pictures.
BLACK AND WHITE 18 MINUTES

Jap Zero

Instructional film featuring Ronald Reagan designed to help American pilots in the Pacific recognise the Zero fighter, made with the help of a captured specimen and animated camerawork.
BLACK AND WHITE 18 MINUTES

The Fleet that came to Stay

'The struggle by men who want to die and men who fight to live.' This United States Navy film covers the invasion of Okinawa which began on Easter Sunday 1945. Spectacular footage of the repeated Kamikaze suicide attacks on the 1,400 ships supporting the operation is the highlight of the film.
BLACK AND WHITE 20 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 7* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV07*

Divide and Conquer

The *Why We Fight* series was made by the US Special Service Division under the auspices of Major Frank Capra specifically for the education of Army personnel as to why America was fighting and the principles for which the United States had gone to war. Film number three covers the invasion of Denmark and Norway, the battle of Narvik, the attack against Holland including the bombing of Rotterdam, the capture of Fort Eben-Emael, the fall of Belgium, breakthrough at Sedan, and evacuation at Dunkirk. Italy enters the war and Hitler triumphantly visits Paris. The film ends with the defeat of France and the signing of the Armistice at Compiègne.
BLACK AND WHITE 54 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 8* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV08*

The Nazis Strike

This is the second film in the *Why We Fight* series made by the US Special Service Division under Major Frank Capra at the request of the US Chief of Staff George C. Marshall to win the 'battle for men's minds . . . a series of documented, factual information films to explain to our boys in the army *why* we are fighting and the *principles* for which we are fighting'. *The Nazis Strike* describes the rise of the Nazi party, the establishment of the German war machine and the expansion of the army and Luftwaffe. 'I am willing to sign anything . . . I will do anything to facilitate the success of my policy.' Thus Hitler's words in an October 1933 interview heralded the take-over of Europe beginning with the occupation of the Rhineland in 1936 and ending with the capture of Warsaw three years later.
BLACK AND WHITE 39 MINUTES

German Infantry Small Arms

Produced by the Signal Corps Photographic Center as an instructional film on German weapons, the field stripping, loading and firing are illustrated for the Mauser 98K, Schmeisser MP40, MG34 and MG42.
BLACK AND WHITE 12 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 9* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV09*

The Battle of Britain

The intention of the *Why We Fight* series was to educate and inform American military personnel as to the causes of the Second World War and the reasons why the United States became involved. made under the auspices of Major Frank Capra and his Special Service Division, *The Battle of Britain* was the fourth film in the series and covered the period following the collapse of France when Hitler's plans for the invasion of Britain were frustrated by the Royal Air Force. At the time, this film was estimated to have had a service audience of eight million and it was also shown publicly in Britain on the orders of Winston Churchill.
BLACK AND WHITE 49 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 10* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV10*

Beachhead at Anzio

From 1951 to 1964 *The Big Picture* series was probably the most widely screened public service programme in American television history. It projected the story of the United States Army as told by the United States Army assembled from documentary footage taken by the Signal Corps. *Beachhead at Anzio* tells the story of that campaign in the 'all victorious' style of the 1950 documentary, cleverly masking the failings of the Allied high command to exploit what was virtually an unopposed landing. The Viewing Notes help to balance this omission and set the record straight.
BLACK AND WHITE 27 MINUTES

Patton

Another film from *The Big Picture* series, *Patton* is a blatant, trumpet-blowing eulogy of this flamboyant American commander. The film, narrated by Ronald Reagan, follows General George S. Patton's career — with all the plusses and none of the minuses. The Viewing Notes help correct this imbalance of the film which, nevertheless, provides an interesting record of his campaigns with the Seventh Army in Sicily and the Third Army in France and Germany.
BLACK AND WHITE 26 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 11* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV11*

The Stilwell Road

With the Japanese victories in Burma in January 1942, the road linking India and China, completed in 1938, was cut. This documentary covers the operations which led to its re-establishment via the construction of the Ledo Road — later renamed the Stilwell Road after the Deputy Supreme Commander, South-East Asia Command, General 'Vinegar Joe' Stilwell. The fall of Rangoon, destruction of Mandalay, the Allied retreat, the Flying Tigers, Orde Wingate and the Chindits, the air bridge over 'the hump', Merrill's Marauders, the airfield of Broadway, Imphal, Kohima — all come into the story during this lengthy American account of the war in northern Burma.
BLACK AND WHITE 48 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 12* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV12*

Attack! The Battle for New Britain

The visual report of a complete operation in the Pacific theatre — from training to victory. The battle depicted is the attack on Arawe and Cape Gloucester in New Britain in December 1943 and commentary by Lloyd Nolan leads the viewer through planning, briefing, dress rehearsal, embarkation and pre-invasion bombardment. The diversionary landing of General Cunningham's 112th Cavalry Regiment at Arawe on December 26 with the main assault on Cape Gloucester by the 1st Marine Division under General Rupertus. Three months of fierce jungle fighting, typical of the Pacific campaign, was necessary to secure New Britain.
BLACK AND WHITE 54 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 15* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV15*

Combat America

With the emphasis on gunners and gunnery, *Combat America* was filmed in 1943 by a documentary film unit under Captain Clark Gable. It follows the fortunes of the 351st Bombardment Group from their departure from Colorado to arrival at Polebrook and includes some of the finest combat footage of air battles over Europe shot in colour.
COLOUR 59 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 16* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV16*

Target for Today

Target for Today is a pictorial record explaining the procedures involved in the Eighth Air Force's daylight bombing offensive from Britain. Made as an official training film with the primary object of indoctrinating air crews under instruction in the USA, this film covers in detail the planning, preparation and execution of a typical VIIIth Bomber Command mission.
BLACK AND WHITE 88 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 18* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV18*

The True Glory

SHAEF's own visual record produced under the auspices of the Joint Anglo-American Film Planning Committee of the campaign in Europe from Normandy to Berlin. This feature-length film was culled from six and a half million feet of film and was widely acclaimed when released to cinema audiences in Britain following its première in August 1945. Among the 700 cameramen who supplied material for the film, 32 were killed, 16 reported missing and 101 were wounded. General Eisenhower made it his personal concern to approve the final version to ensure it reflected a viable manifestation of the integrated effort which enabled the Allied Expeditionary Force to achieve its victory.
BLACK AND WHITE 80 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 20* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV20*

Target for Tonight

Released in July 1941, *Target for Tonight* must rank as one of the most popular films of the war; one of the first made by the Ministry of Information with the 'hitting back' concept. Filmed with the co-operation of No. 149 Squadron at RAF Mildenhall, the film features the fictional Wellington 'F for Freddie' and its crew on an early raid over Germany. A major 'star' is the (then) Squadron Leader Charles 'Pick' Pickard (who later lost his life on the Amiens prison raid). According to the director, Harry Watt, most of the crew featured were dead by the war's end — immortalised on celluloid, springing to life at the touch of a button, these young men performed their genuine rôle for the camera, giving *Target for Tonight* a certain sense of gravity that demands our respect.
BLACK AND WHITE 50 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 22* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV22*

Siege of Tobruk

This British film provides its audience with a clear, if simplified, view of the siege and breakout of the Tobruk garrison, including its complete replacement under cover of darkness beneath the very noses of the German attackers. In addition to genuine footage, the film includes re-enacted scenes staged for the benefit of the cameras.
BLACK AND WHITE 17 MINUTES

Malta Convoy

Made to tell the story of one of the war's most famous supply convoys, *Malta Convoy* is the story of Operation Pedestal, a fourteen-ship convoy bound for the beleagured Malta garrison. Only five ships survived the constant air and sea attacks; some stunning combat footage of convoys under air attack is seen including the well-known clip of the battered oil tanker *Ohio* entering Valetta harbour.
BLACK AND WHITE 13 MINUTES

Liberation of Rome

Tracing the progress of the Allied forces from their Sicilian springboard into Italy, British-made *Liberation of Rome* features the Italian campaign up to the entry into Rome, including the Anzio landings and the battle for Monte Cassino.
BLACK AND WHITE 21 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 24* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV24*

Shipbusters

This short documentary presented by the RAF Film Unit is a neat package of Allied and Axis library footage linked by specially shot material featuring the Beaufighters and Mosquitos of Nos. 144 and 248 Squadrons. The story illustrates a typical raid against German shipping off the coast and in the fjords of Norway.
BLACK AND WHITE 15 MINUTES

Raising Air Fighters

A peacetime newsreel, this film is a fascinating visual record of the RAF in the thirties during the pre-war expansion period featuring, amongst others, Harts, Demons, and Tutors, the Fairey Fox, the Vildebeeste, Wellesley and the Whitley.
BLACK AND WHITE 17 MINUTES

Fighter Pilot

Featuring the fighter pilots of the RAF, much of the activity centres on No. 64 Squadron and Squadron Leader A. R. D. MacDonnell, DFC, during the Battle of Britain.
BLACK AND WHITE 8 MINUTES

The Eighty Days

This is the official record of the flying bomb attacks during 1944 when more than 10,000 of Hitler's revenge weapons, the Vergeltungswaffe 1, were launched against London and southern England.
BLACK AND WHITE 13 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 25* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV25*

Ferry Pilot

Released in January 1942, *Ferry Pilot* tells the story of 'the forgotten pilots' — the men, and women, of the Air Transport Auxiliary. This wartime ferry organisation provided the tools for the front line squadrons to finish the job, and the detailed Viewing Notes give much background information on the aircraft types seen, including a Messerschmitt Bf 110 flown by the RAF!
BLACK AND WHITE 35 MINUTES

Speed up on Stirlings

The only British bomber designed at the outset to take four engines, the Stirling's rôle has been largely overshadowed by its successors — the Halifax and Lancaster. This film focuses a spotlight on the Stirling and its production.
BLACK AND WHITE 20 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 26* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV26*

The Air Plan

An action-packed compilation of footage depicting the air war over the continent of Europe, leading up to, and including, the invasion of Normandy for which the bombing of communications was a vitally important ingredient.
BLACK AND WHITE 28 MINUTES

Target Germany

Covering the rôle of Bomber Command, *Target Germany* graphically illustrates the development of the RAF's bombing campaign during the latter half of the Second World War. The attacks on the German war machine and its strategic industries, through the increasing build-up of the heavy bomber forces, brings total war and total destruction to Germany.
BLACK AND WHITE 22 MINUTES

Sky Giant

This wartime newsreel is a compilation of film dedicated to the Lancaster — mainstay of RAF Bomber Command after its introduction in March 1942. Leslie Mitchell's wartime commentary reflects the affection which cinema audiences felt for the RAF's greatest bomber — a feeling yet undiminished long after the last aircraft rolled off the production line.
BLACK AND WHITE 10 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 27* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV27*

Report from the Aleutians

Report from the Aleutians was made in 1943 by the renowned Hollywood director Major John Huston in the bleak, windswept wastes of Alaska. Presented in a non-sensational style, this film provides some of the best quality colour footage shot by US Army photographers during the Second World War, and serves to bring a spotlight on the air operations of the US 11th Air Force in the little-known campaign with Japanese forces in the north Pacific theatre.
COLOUR 44 MINUTES

EXCLUSIVE TO AFTER THE BATTLE

Theirs is the Glory

'This film is a tribute to every man who fought at Arnhem and an everlasting memorial to those who gave their lives.'

Thus the producers described a unique film which sets out to record the events of September 1944 when the 1st Airborne Division landed at Arnhem to capture the bridge across the Neder Rhine in the face of a superior enemy force equipped with heavy armour, suffering in the process grevious losses.

One year later survivors returned to the actual battlefield amid the ruins of the town to re-enact an action in which they had gained the admiration even of the enemy. *Theirs is the Glory* was produced entirely without the use of studio sets or actors and every incident was either experienced or witnessed by those who appear in the film. Original footage shot at the time is interwoven to produce a remarkable piece of cinema history.

BLACK AND WHITE 82 MINUTES

VIDEOCASSETTE 28* £14.95 inc. VAT *CODE VV28*

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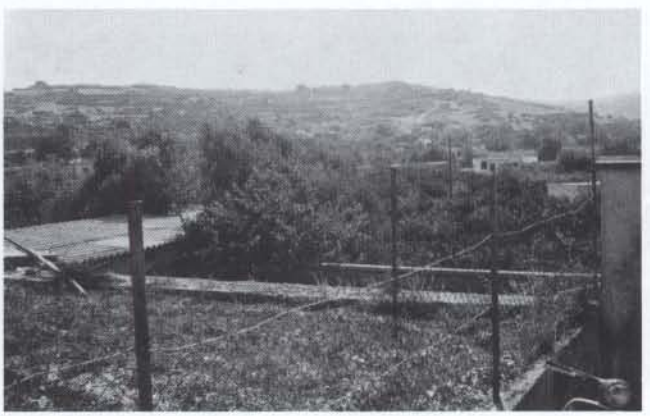
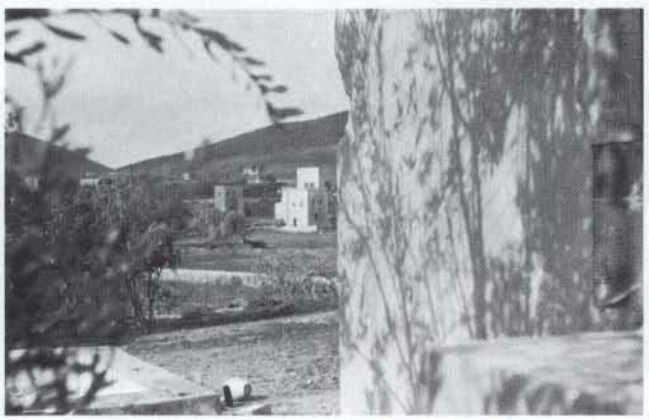
Obergefreiter Hans Weiser of the communications platoon was carrying an Agfa and Peter followed his route from the spot where he landed at the foot of Mount Rachi. *Left:* Weiser took this shot of himself using the self-timer early on November 14.

He was lucky: although struck by a bullet in his pocket, and with two panels of his parachute alight, he landed safely unlike this paratrooper *(right)* who fell to his death after a projectile severed the straps of his parachute.

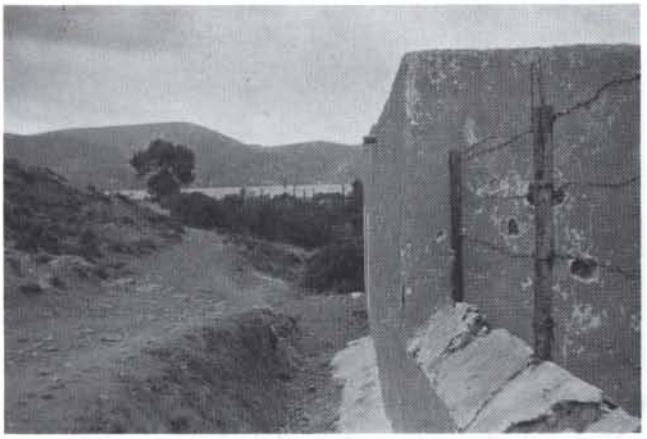


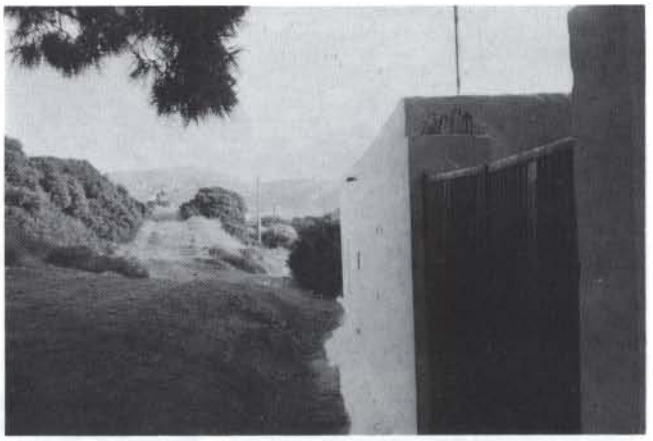
Weiser's first frame shows the view from the platoon's HQ towards Mount Germano which was then in German hands.



His second shot shows the corner of the house, Peter's comparison being taken somewhat higher up because of the bushes.

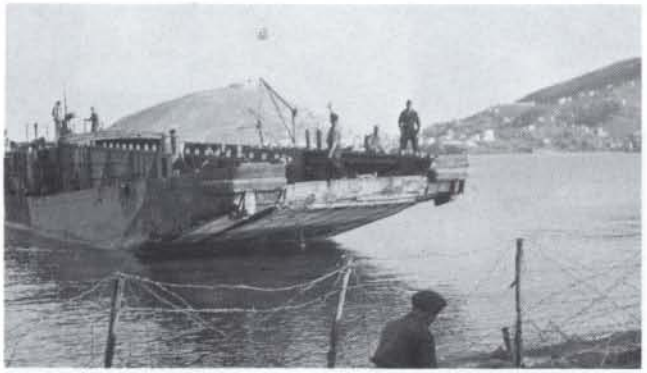
This Oberfeldwebel dropped from the same aircraft as Weiser but was shot immediately after landing just east of the HQ.

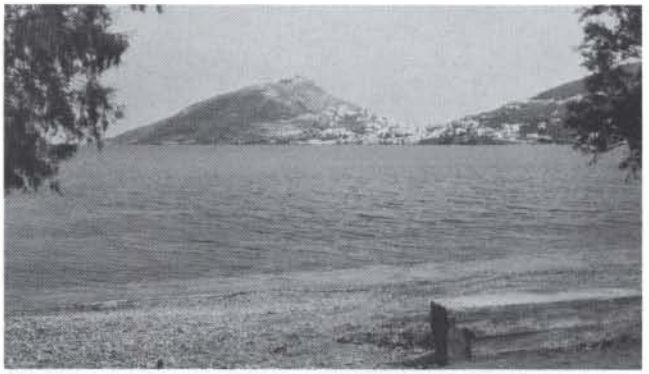




One can understand the amazement of the owner when Peter Schenk, a dentist from Berlin, turned up with this sequence of pictures. Mrs Kathy Karanikolaou's late husband had purchased the house after the war and, while she was aware of the fighting which took place all around in 1943 (her father was German), she had little idea that her home had once been a Fallschirmjäger headquarters! Little had changed over the intervening 50 years apart from the more lush vegetation.

As the British fortress reserve had already been committed, no immediate counter-attack could be made. Brigadier Tilney did give orders for a night attack on the Rachi Ridge, to be led by Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice French using C Company of his Irish Fusiliers and Headquarters Company of the King's Own. However, the attack had to be postponed and later cancelled when C Company failed to arrive because of poor communications, and the chance of containing the landing was lost.





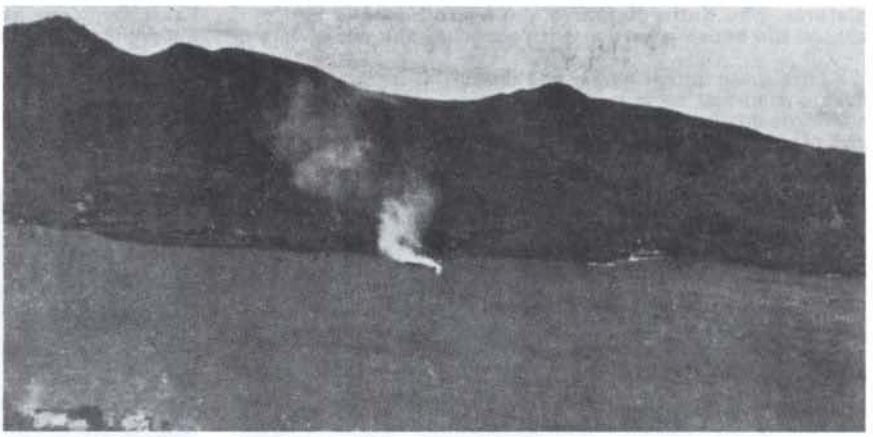
Shallow-draught ferry lighters, like the one shown *above* in Alinda Bay after the battle, were used to bring in reinforcements and supplies but on the morning of November 13 one was hit close to the northern shore of the bay where it blew up *(below)*.

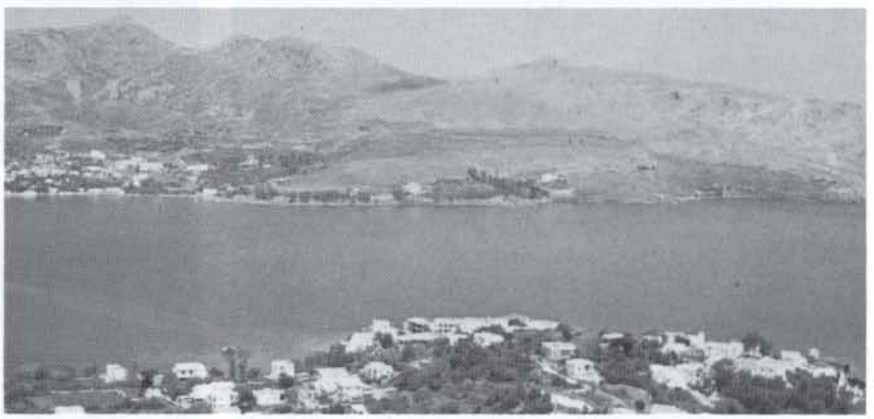
THE SECOND DAY

Twenty-four hours after landing, the Germans occupied three important positions in the centre of Leros, but as yet had not joined up. At the same time, reinforcements were on their way. Gruppe Aschoff (II./Gren.Rgt. 16), which had failed to land at Gurna, came ashore in Grifo Bay in the early hours of November 13. One ferry lighter, probably *F129* or *F331*, was hit in Alinda Bay and exploded. A part of II. Bataillon of Gren.Rgt. 16 was forced to move out to sea once more before landing. At 0545, the reserve parachute force, 15. Fallschirm-Kompanie 'Brandenburg' with 40 Luftwaffe paratroops attached, jumped into the German parachute bridgehead. One of the Ju 52s was shot down and one released its men by mistake over Alinda Bay.

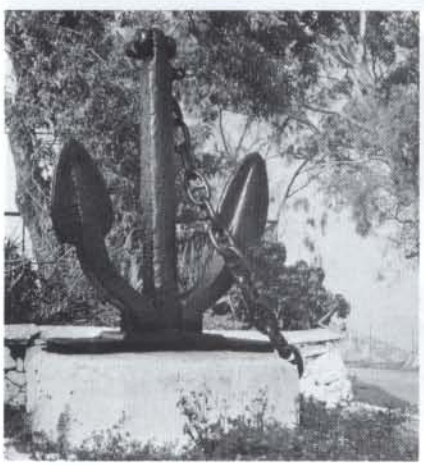
Gruppe von Saldern (II./Gren.Rgt. 65) was now able to join with the parachute troops and attack Mount Quirico at 1800 which was captured but later retaken by the British. In the afternoon, a gale blew up which halted any possibility of reinforcements coming in or air raids being carried out.

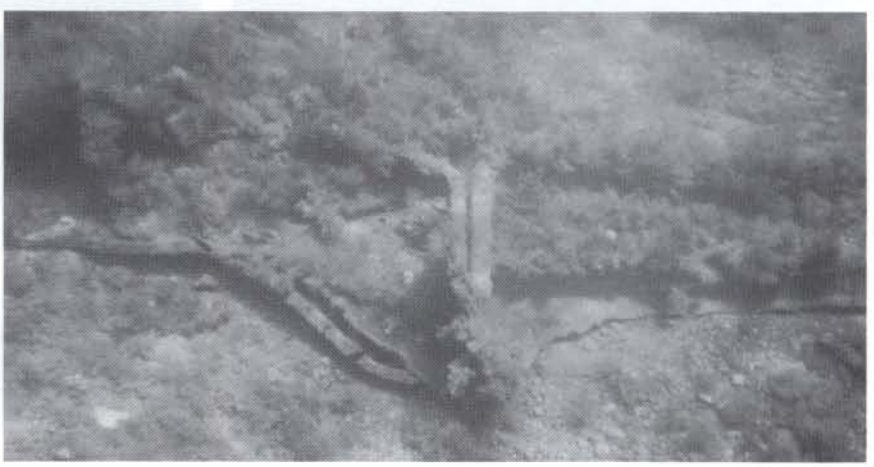
Brigadier Tilney then asked Lieutenant-Colonel French to prepare a further attack on Appetici that night. Three companies of the King's Own were assigned to this task. Colonel French, having the best knowledge of the island, was detailed to lead. However, one company was called away when a German attack started at Meraviglia, so French attacked with A and D Companies alone at 0200 after the destroyers *Echo* and *Belvoir* had shelled the mountain. The attack did not develop as hoped, and first light found the British in exposed positions halfway up the hill. The Küstenjäger were now led by the medical officer of the unit, Dr Martin Schrägle (Leutnant Schädlich had been wounded the day before) and, with the assistance of 9. Kompanie of Gren.Rgt. 440, they counter-attacked down the slope which led to a confused retreat by the British force after a vain attempt by the officers to hold the position. Colonel French was killed in this action.





After taking a comparison shot *(above)* from Mount Meraviglia — Leros town is in the foreground — Peter decided to dive on the wreck. *Below:* Only odd pieces from the lighter remained on the sea-bed but this anchor *(left)*, on display at Pandeli, is said to have been recovered from the lighter.





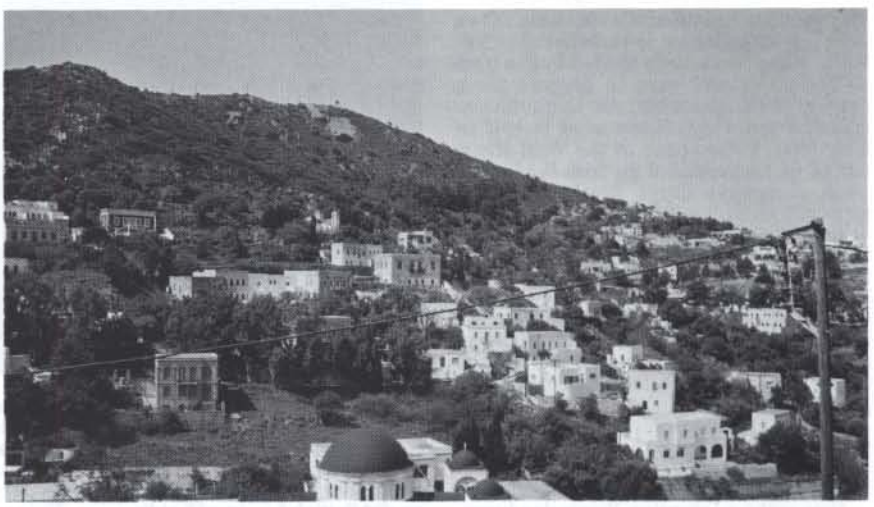
Stukas over Mount Meraviglia. The fighting on the Rachi-Meraviglia ridge continued back and forth for five days until, on the 16th, Major von Saldern's group, reinforced by the III. Bataillon of Jäger-Regiment 1, overran the British positions.

THE THIRD DAY

At 0500 on November 14, the paratroopers attacked Meraviglia with their 2. and 4. Kompanie and Stuka assistance. However, they were beaten off and at 0930, C Company of the Irish Fusiliers counter-attacked along the Rachi Ridge. This developed well, and some 50 prisoners were taken, but B Company of the Royal West Kents and B Company of the Irish Fusiliers, proceeding in the valleys on either side of the ridge, were not able to follow up, and by evening C Company was forced to withdraw. In the meantime, B Company of the Royal West Kents and D Company of the 'Buffs' were able to capture Mount Germano.

A dawn attack by D Company of the 'Buffs' from the east took the defenders on Mount Clidi, a Luftwaffen-Feldjäger unit, by surprise and 40 prisoners were taken. A German attack on Mount Quirico was successful at first, but an immediate counter-attack by C Company of the 'Buffs' wiped the German forces out, 70 men being captured.

At 1730, the destroyers *Penn*, *Aldenham* and *Blencathra* shelled positions on Rachi for 20 minutes, before they were harrassed by Do 217s of KG100 armed with glider bombs. That night, *Echo* and *Belvoir* transferred the 2nd Royal West Kents (minus B Company which was already on Leros) from Samos to Portolago, Leros. The Küstenjäger, too, were reinforced during the night by the rest of III. Bataillon of Gren.Rgt. 440 under Hauptmann Doerr sailing in an assault boat and three I-Boats.



Left: **The actual battery position — P.L. 127 (P.L. standing for Pezzo Leggero, i.e., light piece or gun), an anti-aircraft position on Meraviglia mounting six 90mm guns — was a shambles.** *Right:* **Today, this is a restricted military area.**

Left: **The Italian command post on Mount Rachi.** *Right:* **A nearby ammunition bunker has now found a new, if somewhat unusual, use as an ossuary.**

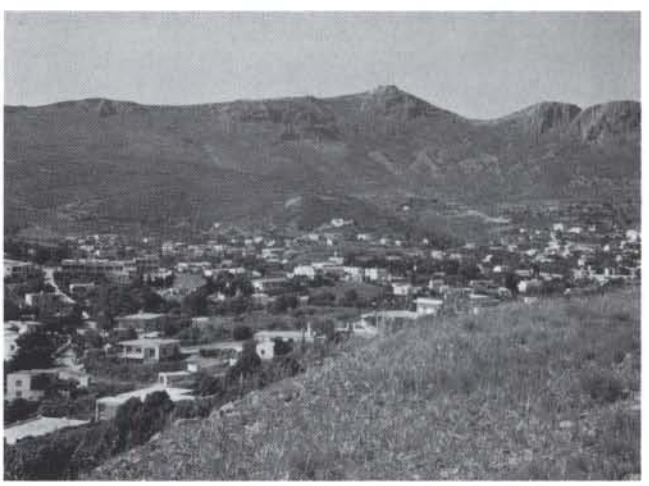
THE FOURTH DAY

Brigadier Tilney had ordered another attack to go in on the Rachi Ridge at 0830 on November 15. The commander of the Special Boat Squadron, Major George Jellicoe, managed to slip through German lines and back again to brief forces in the northern sector. In the south, A Company, the first of the two fresh companies of the Royal West Kents, attacked according to plan but gained ground only very slowly, suffering heavy casualties including all its officers. Eventually, the bunkers on Rachi were taken but they then had to withdraw as the King's Own were not following up as expected. At 1500, Rachi Ridge was heavily shelled by fire from all Italian coastal guns to prepare for a renewal of the attack but, due to insufficient coordination, the infantry went in half an hour later. C Company of the West Kents and all that remained of the Irish Fusiliers (a weak company) drove north and were expected to meet with the 'Buffs' attacking in their direction. They failed to make contact and suffered heavy casualties, although they took 50 prisoners. When the 'Faughs' got held up by German strong points, the West Kents had to fight their way back. All day, Stukas patrolled overhead, ready to attack any targets requested by ground troops, who communicated with the pilots by flares or radio.

At 0800, Gruppe Doerr launched an attack from Appetici towards the castle which was initially beaten off by the British, but at 1545 the castle finally fell into German hands.

That night a returning Pionierlandungsboot was sunk by British destroyers.

By the 15th, the breakdown in communications between the isolated British units — constant bombing cut land lines and radios were unreliable in the mountains — led to piecemeal attacks and mounting confusion. The end of the battle could not be long delayed as, in the words of the official history, 'the weary troops fought as best they could, doggedly, and without success'. The Rachi Ridge was the key and when it fell, so did British hopes of holding out. These crumbling remains on Mount Rachi are part of the Italian Battery P.L. 211 which mounted four 102mm guns.



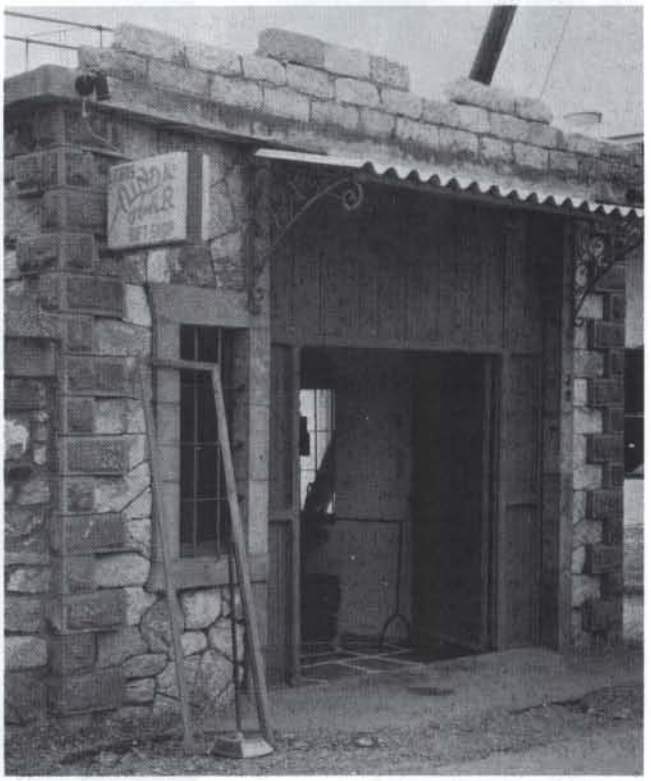
The battle over, Hans Weiser returns to recover his parachute from the northern slope of Rachi.

THE FIFTH DAY

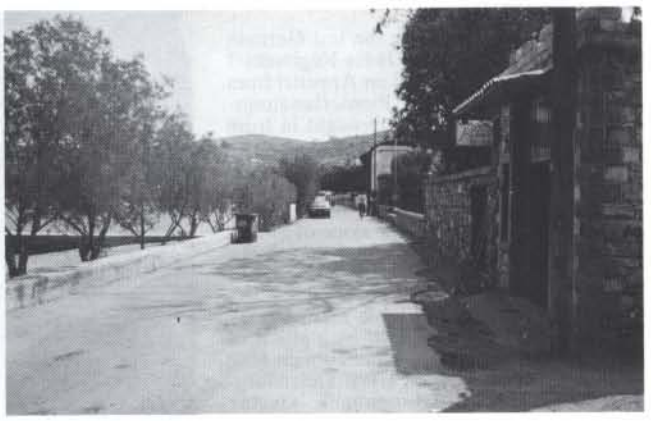
Early on November 16, the last German reserve, III. Bataillon of Jäger-Regiment 1 'Brandenburg', was landed on Appetici from a ferry lighter and four Pionierlandungsboote after they had been brought in from Athens by air and by two destroyers. The Fallschirmjäger force had left Rachi silently during the night and moved, together with other forces, into new positions in Leros town (Platanos) on the steep slope of Mount Meraviglia. At 0400, the group, under the command of Major von Saldern, launched an initial attack which was repelled by the British using every available man, but by 1500 an assault was mounted by a group of 20 Brandenburgers led by Oberleutnant Max Wandrey (commander of III./Brandenburg-Regiment 1, after Hauptmann Gustav Froboese had been wounded earlier that day). By 1700, the Germans broke into the British headquarters tunnel where Brigadier Tilney was surprised by a grenade and automatic fire. He was taken prisoner by Oberfeldwebel Erich Horsthemke at 1730.

Right: **His battle over, Brigadier Tilney talks to Generalleutnant Müller.**

Smiles all round as the German commander stops for a word with the wounded outside the Villa Bellini in Alinda which had



been used as a field hospital. Today, the villa houses the local museum.



The most-severely wounded were evacuated by Dornier flying boat from the promenade just below the villa.

Meanwhile, not far away, paratroopers begin to assemble . . .

Tilney decided that, although he was a prisoner and did not have to give orders any more, the fighting should end and he recommended capitulation. He was driven in the one available Jeep to Portolago and informed Admiral Mascherpa of his decision. Mascherpa agreed to surrender his Italian force and the news was communicated to all parts of the island by German and British officers travelling in the Jeep. Only the Long Range Desert Group under Colonel Guy Prendergast and Major Jellicoe with the Special Boat Squadron as well as some other groups (250 men in total) refused to take notice of the surrender, and continued fighting until they were evacuated.

. . . while more Fallschirmjäger march back from their battle on Mount Meraviglia.

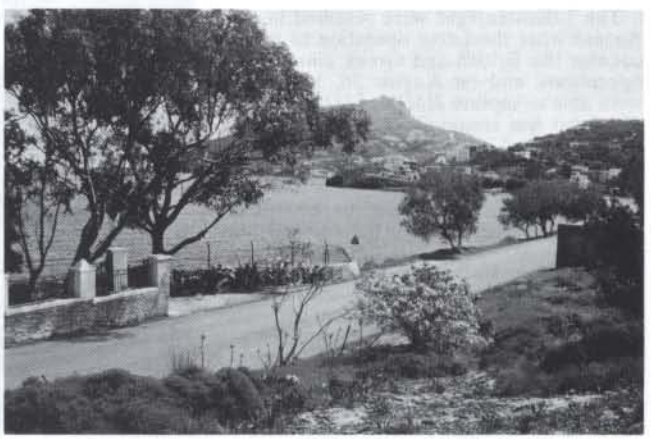
Above left: **And down come the Küstenjäger. Although it is not possible to precisely date these photographs, we know they show men of the 1. Kompanie and Peter proved** *(above right)* **that they were descending from Mount Appetici after the capture of Battery Lago. Most probably they were taken on the final day.** *Below left:* **The party, which includes some Italian prisoners, approaches Leros town.** *Below right:* **The castle can be seen on top of the hill on the right.**

Generalleutnant Müller was given the news while on the way to Leros and he was much surprised by it. In all, some 3,200 British and 5,350 Italians were made prisoner. Another 357 British troops had been killed, among them the 157 men drowned en route to Leros. The Germans had suffered 246 killed, and a report dated December 1943 listed 162 as missing.

Admiral Luigi Campioni, commander of the Italian Aegean Islands, and Admiral Luigi Mascherpa, the Italian commander on Leros, were sentenced to death by a German military court and executed on March 24, 1944 in Parma.

Below: **One of their men, Fritz Kramer, captured one of the few serviceable Jeeps left on Leros and it could well have been his vehicle which was used to take Brigadier Tilney down to Portolago to confer with Admiral Mascherpa.**

The remains of a Jeep found by Peter near Katsouni.



Left: **Prisoners are assembled at Lepida but as this area now houses a psychiatric clinic, entry was not permitted so Peter surreptitiously sneaked this shot from another angle.**

AFTERMATH

The final act in the battle for the Dodecanese was the occupation of Samos. As air reconnaissance had shown that the remaining British units on the island had left via Turkey, General Müller did not anticipate any serious opposition. At dusk on November 21, a boat with a white flag was sent to Samos, only to be driven off by artillery fire, but the following morning Major Wilhelm Walther, commander of Jäger-Regiment 1 'Brandenburg', accepted the surrender of the Italian garrison which consisted of elements of the Cuneo Division at 1140. Meanwhile, Long Range Desert Group troops were evacuated from Seriphos and Mykonos, Castelrosso being the last island to be evacuated.

After XIII. Bataillon of the 999. Festungs-Infanterie-Division arrived on Leros, the 22. Infanterie-Division returned to Crete. Generalleutnant Ulrich Kleemann with his Sturmdivision Rhodos was now commander of the Eastern Aegean. The Italian batteries on Leros were taken over by a naval artillery detachment, Marine-Artillerie-Abteilung 624, and a naval Flak detachment. All the main batteries were capable of being made operational again and, all told, some 60 from the 103 Italian guns were taken into German service. There were few incidents during the German occupation of Leros (as opposed to that of Crete), and only one Greek from Samos was shot. When supplies became scarce because of British and French destroyer and aircraft patrols, the civil population had to be supplied by the International Red Cross.

On September 1, 1944, Heeresgruppe E started its withdrawal from Greece, including as many troops as possible from the Aegean Islands where, besides Crete, only Rhodes, Kos and Leros were declared fortresses. Thereafter, the garrisons on the isolated islands led a boring and hungry existence, only assuaged when, after the declaration of war with Turkey on February 24, 1945, small raiding parties landed in Turkey to bring back sheep.

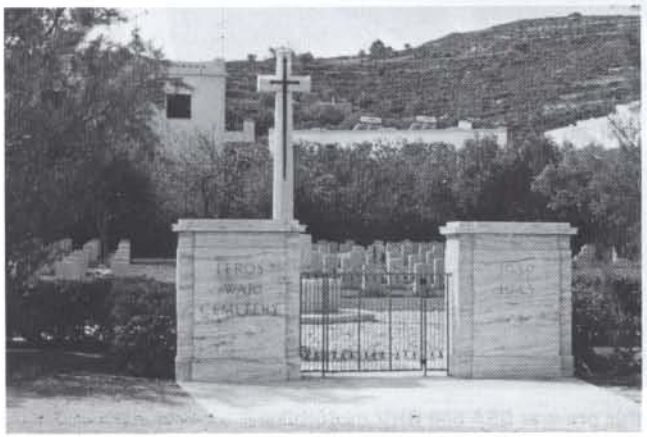
The 1./Küstenjäger were retained in the Aegean after the Leros operation to try to counter the British and Greek commando operations, and on August 26, 1944 they were able to capture *HMDL 1381* at Syrina. This boat was renamed *KJ 25* and became the 'battleship' of the German forces in the Dodecanese. At 0700 on May 8, 1945, *KJ 25* took the last Commander Eastern Aegean, Generalmajor Otto Wagener, to the British destroyer *Active* off Symi for capitulation talks.

The former Italian Dodecanese Islands were ceded to Greece after the war. Turkey demanded their demilitarisation and this resulted in the destruction of ammunition — usually stored in underground caverns beneath the guns — by British forces. Most of the gun emplacements were therefore blown up.

Above: **German casualties were buried in a war graves plot established on the shore of Alinda Bay but in 1975 they were exhumed and transferred to the German war cemetery at Dionyssos-Rapendoza north-east of Athens.** *Below:* **Today on Leros, only the outer wall of the old plot and the base of the cross remain to be seen.**

The Italian dead were also exhumed after the war and returned to Italy but a memorial to all their war casualties was erected in front of the school at Portolago (now renamed Lakki). However, its inscription: 'Italians and Greeks, united in battle against the Germans' upset Greek nationalists who blew it up in 1993. A replacement memorial *(right)*, this time devoid of any inscription which might cause offence, was erected on a new site near the hospital in the town.

At the end of the 1950s, Leros, together with Salamis and Suda, Crete, was earmarked as a NATO naval base and large fuel tanks were built near Parteni (Partheni) Bay. From 1968, the former Italian naval barracks in San Giorgio, and a former Italian torpedo bunker in Parteni, were used as political prisons during the time of the military junta. Then, in the mid-1970s, following the Cyprus crisis, the island was fortified against a possible attack from nearby Turkey. Permanent positions were built on top of Mount Clidi and Mount Meraviglia using tank turrets. Many blockhouses sited to defend the beaches are still heavily camouflaged, although they seem rather outdated nowadays to the extent that one such bunker can be found beside the tables in the garden of a new hotel in Alinda Bay!



However, British and Commonwealth dead (including Lieutenant-Colonel French) remain buried on the island in the war cemetery near Leros (the town has now been renamed Platanos), and it was here that British and German servicemen met together in 1988 for the first time since the war *(right)* to hold a service of reconciliation and remembrance.

On September 7, 1988, a reunion between British and German veterans took place on Leros at the invitation of Edward Johnson, when 97 British veterans and relatives met 60 German veterans and relatives for the first time since the war. A commemorative service was held at the British cemetery following which Martin Kühne took a party to the Rachi battle area and Ted Johnson a similar one to Appetici.

Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice French was killed in the night attack on November 14 but when Peter found his grave *(left)* in the Leros cemetery, the date inscribed on the headstone was '12th November'. We raised the matter with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission who, after checking their records, agreed it was incorrect. A replacement headstone will therefore be engraved and erected. *Above:* No such discrepancy befalls the marker at Dionyssos-Rapendoza to Generalleutnant Müller, who was shot in Athens by the Greeks on May 20, 1947. He had been found guilty of war crimes committed while on Crete yet it appears that no one was brought to justice for the deaths of the Italian officers executed under his orders on Leros.

Left: **A relic of the past in Portolago — a Canadian Chevrolet C15A 15-cwt 4x4 GS truck, with both 'early' and 'late' features, indicating a military or civilian rebuild, and** *(right)* **a Fiat 508 Balilla of the mid-1930s spotted by Peter in Pandeli.**

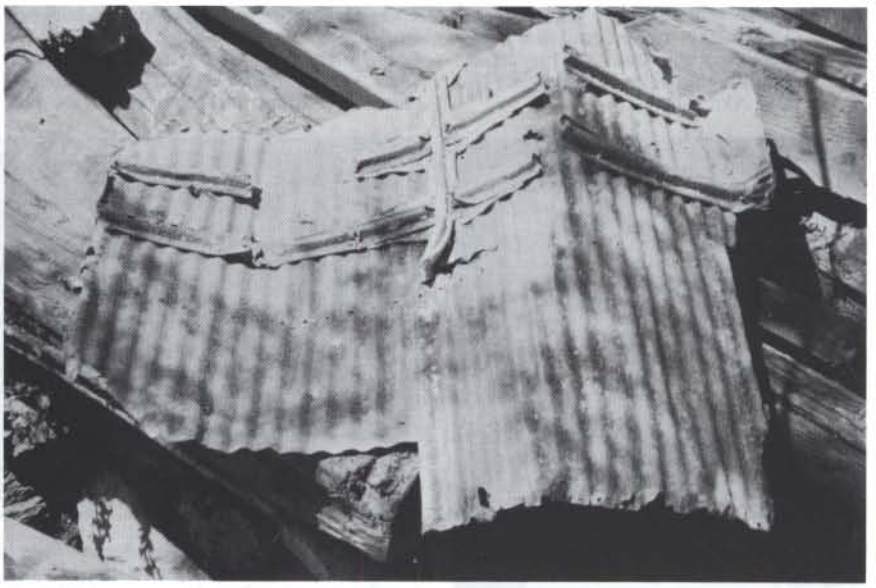
LEROS TODAY

Leros has not changed nearly as much as most of the other Greek islands have with the advent of tourism. One reason is that the island only has one narrow beach suitable for bathers, in Alinda Bay, another reason being the fact that many of the islanders work in a large mental hospital in Lepida and so it has not been necessary to encourage visitors. Nevertheless, quite a number of hotels and apartment houses have been built in Alinda and Pandeli, but most of the old villas still exist. Lakki, the former Portolago, is a unique mixture of large buildings in Renaissance and Bauhaus styles, contrasting with Platanos (the former Leros town) which is built in the traditional Greek manner.

All the former Italian batteries are accessible, apart from Ciano on Mount Clidi and P.L. 127 on Mount Meraviglia which are still occupied by the military. Nevertheless, it is possible to get up to the former Italian barracks on the west slope just under the top of Clidi by taking the concrete road from the junction near Partheni near the Greek Army barracks. The road is usually off limits but if you tell the sentry that you want to go to the church at Agia Kyrikos (formerly Quirico) and cross yourself, it should work! The road is paved up to the top so you can go by car. Half-way up, there is a dirt road leading to Agia Kyrikos and the barracks building of the small Italian battery, now used as a goat barn, as are most of the other barracks!

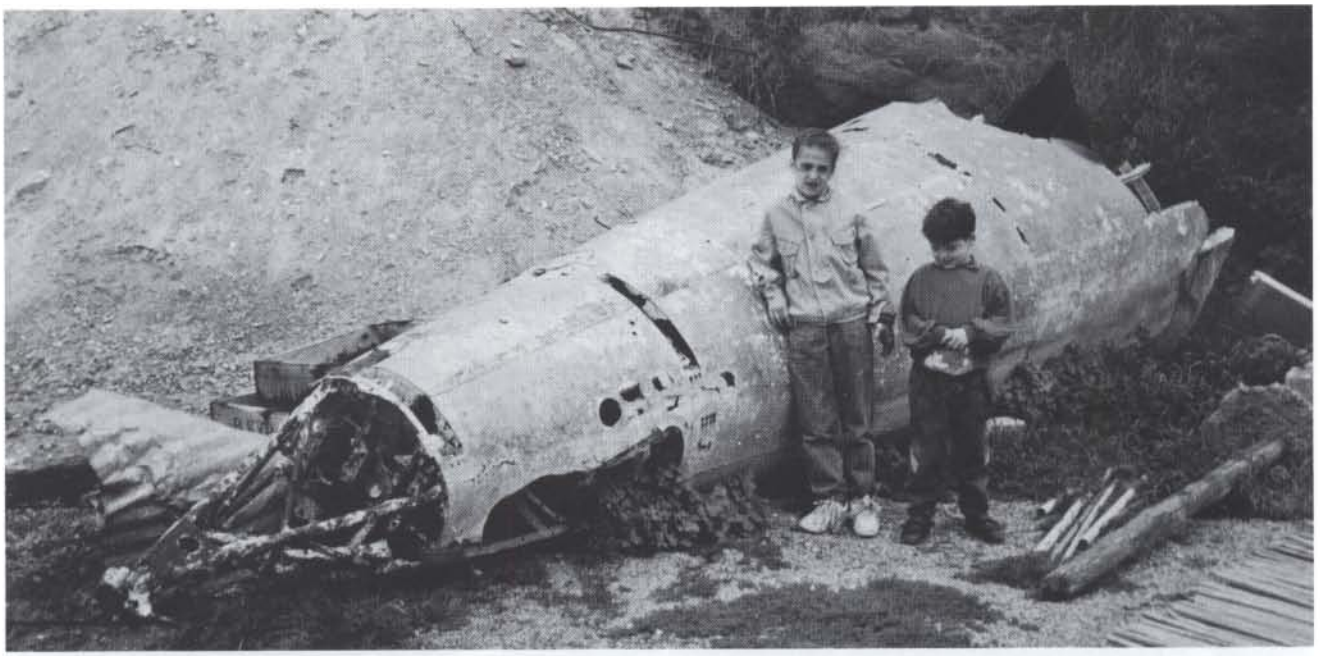
The same garage had this pre-war BSA 500 OHV motorbike.

Another dirt road which is negotiable using an ordinary vehicle leads from a junction on the road to Partheni, opposite to Mount Agia Kyrikos, near the ruins of barracks, up to the batteries on Mount Muplogurna and Markelos (the former Marcello). The Mount Marcello battery was named 'Farinata' by the Italians and has a well-preserved command bunker although the gun emplacements have been blown up. The road to the top of Mount Muplogurna is very bad, so this battery can only be visited on foot.



Left: **Georgis Valsamis with a wheel from a Ju 52 which came down in the yard of his home north of Alinda Bay on November 12, 1943. Peter researched the crash and discovered that the aircraft was from the 2. Staffel of Transportgeschwader 4, coded G6+CH. Only the gunner escaped; Georgis saw him running away after the crash.**

Right: **Seemingly just a piece of corrugated metal, Peter established that it came from another Ju 52 of 6. Staffel TG4 shot down on November 13. It had been hit in the electrics so that the 12 parachutists failed to get the signal to jump and were still on board when it ditched near Cape Katosimi. All were drowned, save for three members of the crew.**



Another piece of aircraft wreckage trawled up from the sea has also been tentatively identified by Peter Schenk. It is possibly the tail section from an He 111 from the II. Gruppe of KG100, shot down on November 14 while on a supply drop to the Küstenjäger on Mount Appetici. An Arado 196 floatplane tried to rescue the crew but was driven off by enemy fire.

Another driveable, unpaved road leads to the Asfougaros battery (P.L. 899). Just take the road from Partheni to Plefouti and proceed straight on into the dirt road. Another battery, Katsouni (Cazzuni), named 'Ducci' by the Italians, can be reached via the coastal road from Lakki to Katsouni if you proceed on the track up the cliff. This road leads to Mount Patelia (Patella) too, where the Italian air defence headquarters used to be situated.

Battery Lago on Mount Apetiki (Appetici) is the most interesting because of the events which took place there. It was named after the civil engineer who built the fortress buildings on the island. It is easy to reach if you take the road from Platanos to the castle as far as the windmills. Park your car there and walk up the hill using the old Italian road. An unpaved road leads from Krithoni up to the battery on Mount Rachi near a chapel.

Not much can be seen of the battery on Mount Tsigounas (Zuncona), accessible via Lepida, as the mountain peak has been completely blown away and resembles a volcano. Worthwhile, though, is a visit to Mount Scumbarda with the naval battery 'San Giorgio' to the west and an AA battery to the east. Mount Scumbarda is the highest in the island and the view from the gun emplacements is well worth the effort, the more so since the only preserved ammunition bunkers on Leros can be found there. To get there, take the road from Xerocampos to the quarry and proceed uphill. The old road above the quarry is not maintained so you have to walk or use a four-wheel drive vehicle to reach the top. There are some more smaller batteries where only the crew quarters can be found.

Out at sea, most wrecks within easy reach were recovered after the war. In Lakki harbour, there are still the remains of the destroyers Queen Olga *and* Intrepid, *but diving on these wrecks is prohibited as they are declared war graves. An Italian boom defence vessel lies in the Katsuni narrows and another outside of Partheni Bay. At the eastern tip of Strongili Island, the Pionierlandungsboot H lies only six metres down, whereas the two sunken I-Boats east of Apetiki are at a depth of 45 metres. Some remains of MAS 559 can still be seen from the surface in Kryphos (Grifo) Bay. Only a few twisted steel plates remain from the ferry lighter sunk in Alinda Bay near the chapel of Panagies on the beach. The wreck of the Ju 52 shot down on November 13 is 45 metres deep near Cape Katosimi, still with the skeleton of one of the crew in the cabin. Scuba diving in the waters around Leros is forbidden except when accompanied by a licensed diver, Panos Sideris, from Xerocampos. The rear fuselage of the He 111 which was forced down on November 14 was recovered by fishermen and now lies behind the restaurant of Michalis Kephalas on the beach in Pandeli.*

In the rocky battle areas many shell splinters and sometimes even live ammunition can be found. There have been numerous accidents after the war, so it is better to be cautious.

In the Villa Bellini museum at Alinda there is a small exhibition on the battle, and more can be found in the pub of Constantinos Paraponiaris at Lakki and at Tasos Kanaris in Platanos.

Constantinos Paraponiaris has made something of a war museum of his shop-cum-bar in Lakki.

SLAUGHTER IN CEFALONIA

By Sergio Andreanelli

Many historians, unfortunately, have given the Italian soldier a bad image. Because of Italy's fascism, too many heroes and too many pioneers in many fields have been neglected. Many battles and campaigns where the Italian soldier fought against overwhelming odds only to be sacrificed have never been told. This is the story of one of those dark episodes.

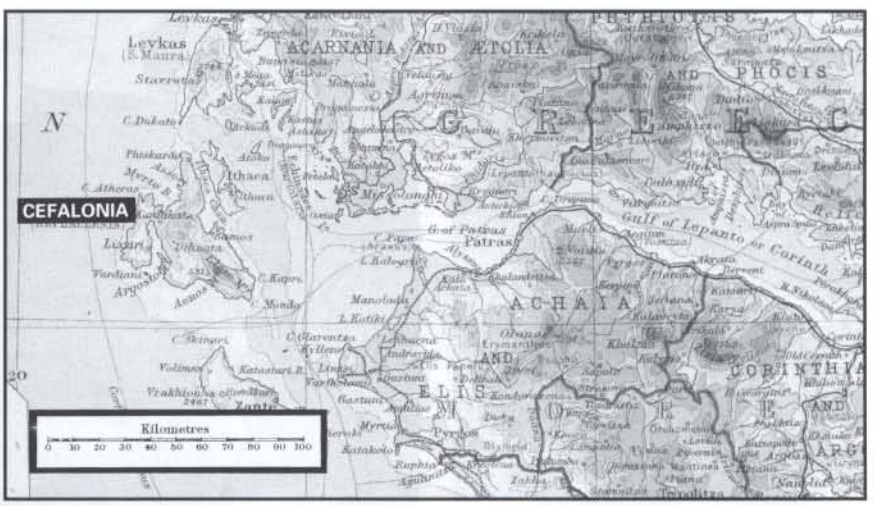
Cefalonia is a Greek island situated in the Gulf of Corinth where the Italian Acqui Division had been stationed since May 1, 1943. This division consisted of the 17th Infantry Regiment; the 317th Infantry Regiment; the 330th Artillery Regiment; Royal Finance Guards; Carabinieri; three field hospitals; AA batteries, Navy coastal batteries; a few MAS (motor torpedo boats) and two seaplanes, in all a total of 525 officers and 11,500 enlisted men.

The commanding general of the Acqui Division was Generale Antonio Gandin, 52 years old, and a graduate of the Modena Military Academy. Of Abbruzzese lineage, he was a tough general who had fought in the Italo-Turkish War of 1911, then in World War I, and had served on the Russian Front in the Second World War and had been awarded the German Iron Cross. He was well known to German generals Keitel, Kesselring and Rommel and well respected.

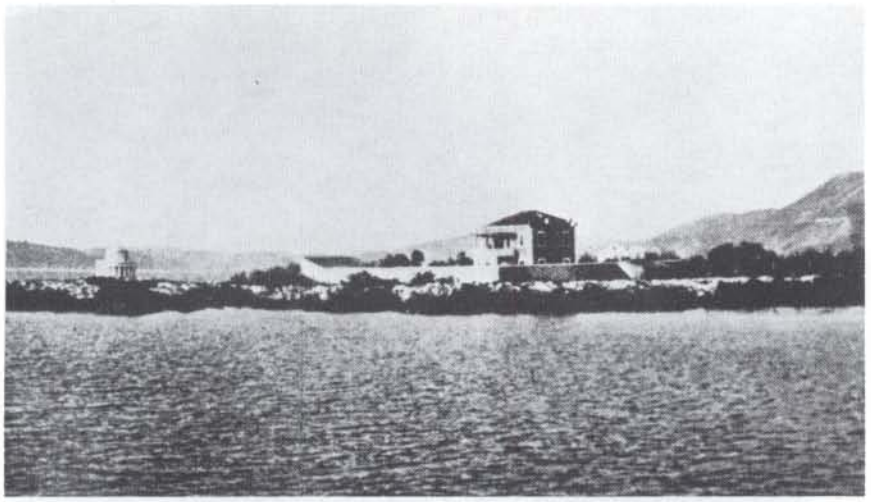
In August 1943, the Acqui Division was joined by the 966. Grenadier-Regiment, under the command of Oberstleutnant Hans Barge. This unit had one self-propelled battery of nine guns.

September 8, 1943 will always remain as a stain to many Italian soldiers who fought in World War II when, at 7.45 p.m., the Badoglio government made its announcement: 'Every act of hostility on our part should cease towards the Anglo-American forces. The Italian Armed Forces should, however, react with maximum decision to any offensive which may come from other quarters whatsoever.'

On Cefalonia, the news was well received by the Italian soldiery. After 28 months of war, misery, inferior equipment and boredom, they were happy and lots of wine was consumed. The Germans kept a cold silence, although some joined in with the Italians. In general, it was a time of euphoria.



Just as Katyn stands as a symbol of horrific massacre to the Poles, likewise so does Cefalonia to the Italians. Although the massacre is little known outside Italy, the slaughter of thousands of Italian soldiers of the Acqui Division, led by Generale Antonio Gandin *(left)*, by the Germans took place on a Greek island in the Gulf of Corinth following the armistice in September 1943.



After the division surrendered to the Germans, the systematic execution of over 4,500 officers and men was carried out in response to Hitler's order to eliminate any Italian officers who showed signs of resistance. Beginning with the shooting of Generale Gandin behind the 'Red House' *(above)* **in San Teodoro, killings took place in nearly 25 other locations throughout the island.**

Generale Gandin immediately contacted Generale Carlo Vecchiarelli, commander of the Eleventh Army in Athens, for clarification of the Badoglio order. Generale Vecchiarelli answered that while 'Italian troops are not to take armed initiative against the Germans, they are not to fraternise with Anglo-Americans or local partisans. Everyone is to remain at his place, maintaining exemplary discipline . . .'.

With such an ambiguous order, excluding any alliance with either local rebel forces or patriots, or even the Allies, the only solution seemed some kind of compromise. But what? The Germans were not prone to half-measures.

Gandin replied with a request for more explicit instructions. Vecchiarelli, under pressure from the Germans in Athens, now ordered Gandin to surrender his arms to the Germans, and hand over the artillery and heavy weapons for safe passage to Italy. Gandin began talks with Oberstleutnant Barge, but he was not sure of German intentions; he wanted to do his duty, but not at the cost of the lives of any of the men under his command. He agonized over what action to take in several staff meetings with his officers.

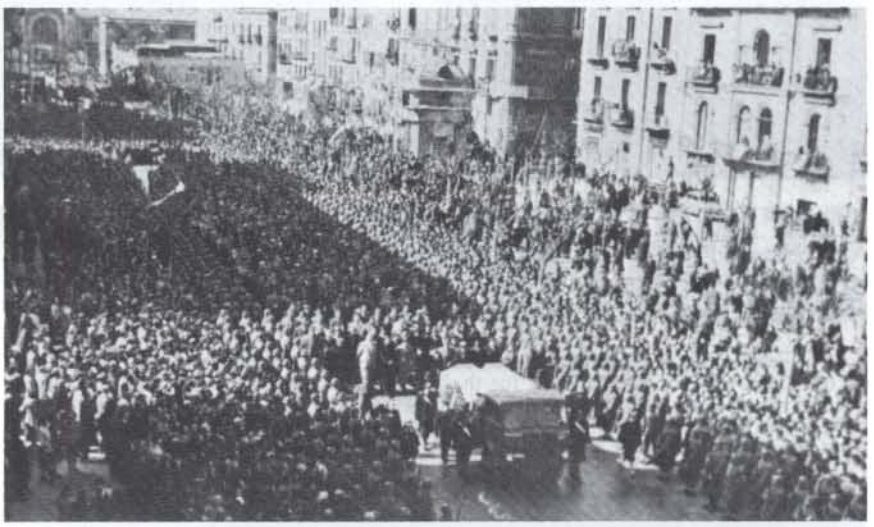
In the meantime, the Germans sent two ferry lighters with heavy weapons and additional troops to Cefalonia; Gandin's suspicions seemed to be confirmed. The Germans on the island then began harassing the Italian troops, calling them 'traitors' and they no longer extended any acts of friendship towards them. One of Gandin's subordinates, Capitano Renzo Apollonio, gave the order to open fire on the approaching vessels. The Italian batteries sank one lighter, and captured the second, damaged. The date was September 13, 1943.

Next day, the II. Bataillon of Jäger-Regiment 98 of the 1. Gebirgs-Division commanded by Major Harald von Hirschfeld arrived on the island. They had previously been in action in Greece, fighting partisans in the mountains. On September 15, German Stukas begin to systematically bomb all the Italian positions on the island which were helpless without sufficient anti-aircraft guns and no air protection. The battle between the former allies soon evolved into a continuous, prolonged massacre. Although the Italians fought back fiercely with losses of 1,250 men, by September 21, Gandin realised that he could no longer hold out and decided to surrender to save those who were left. Gandin was able to converse in the German language and he felt that, as prisoners, he would be able to obtain fair treatment for his men.

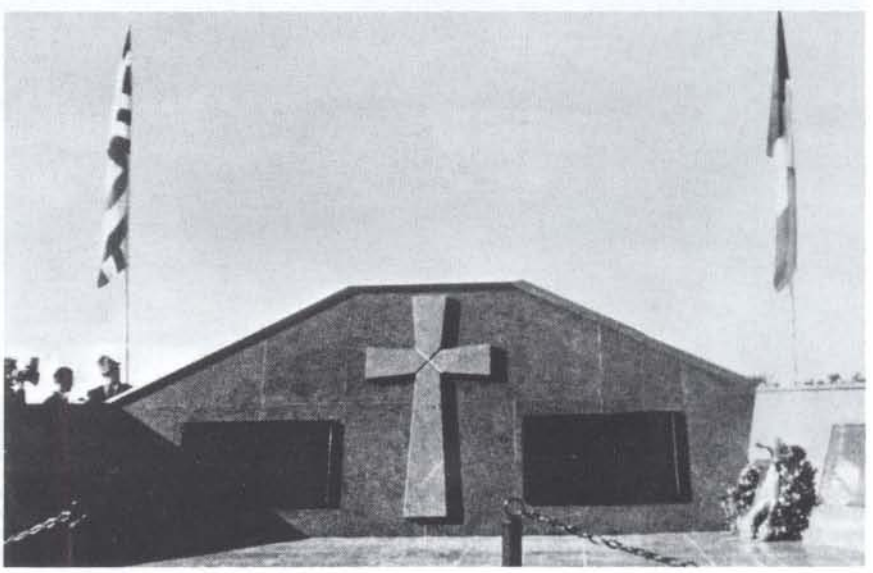
The fair treatment, unfortunately, was never to be. On September 22, near the 'Red House' in San Teodoro, the Gebirgsjäger began to eliminate the Acqui Division, shooting groups of four officers at a time, starting with Generale Gandin. The massacre continued, first the officers, then the non-commissioned officers and finally the enlisted men. By the time the Germans tired of the systematic executions, the death toll had reached 4,750. In October, the 4,000 survivors were shipped off to labour camps in Germany but some 3,000 perished at sea when their vessels hit mines. The final death total was 9,640 soldiers and 390 officers. Subsequently, 22 Medals of Military Valor were awarded, posthumously, to men of the Acqui Division.

Major von Hirschfeld, later promoted to general, was killed in Warsaw in January 1945. General Hubert Lanz, commander of the XXII. Gebirgskorps, the one mainly responsible for the massacre on Cefalonia, was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment at Nuremberg in 1948. (He was released in 1951.)

In the 1950s, the remains of the dead were unearthed and returned to Italy for proper burial, but General Gandin's body was never identified. A monument was erected at San Teodoro to commemorate the tragic episode.



The dead were roughly buried, cremated, or tossed in the sea. After the war, over 3,000 bodies were recovered from graves on the island of which 189 were officers. *Above:* **With all due reverence, the remains were carried back to Italy to be buried in the war cemetery at Bari:** *Below:* **This memorial on Monte Telegrapho on Cefalonia was erected to their memory. Sergio Andreanelli, who has an intense personal interest in the massacre as his father served in the Acqui Division and narrowly escaped death, says that in the hearts of Italians 'the memory of the men who died in the fighting at Cefalonia and those that were also massacred on the island will never be forgotten'.**

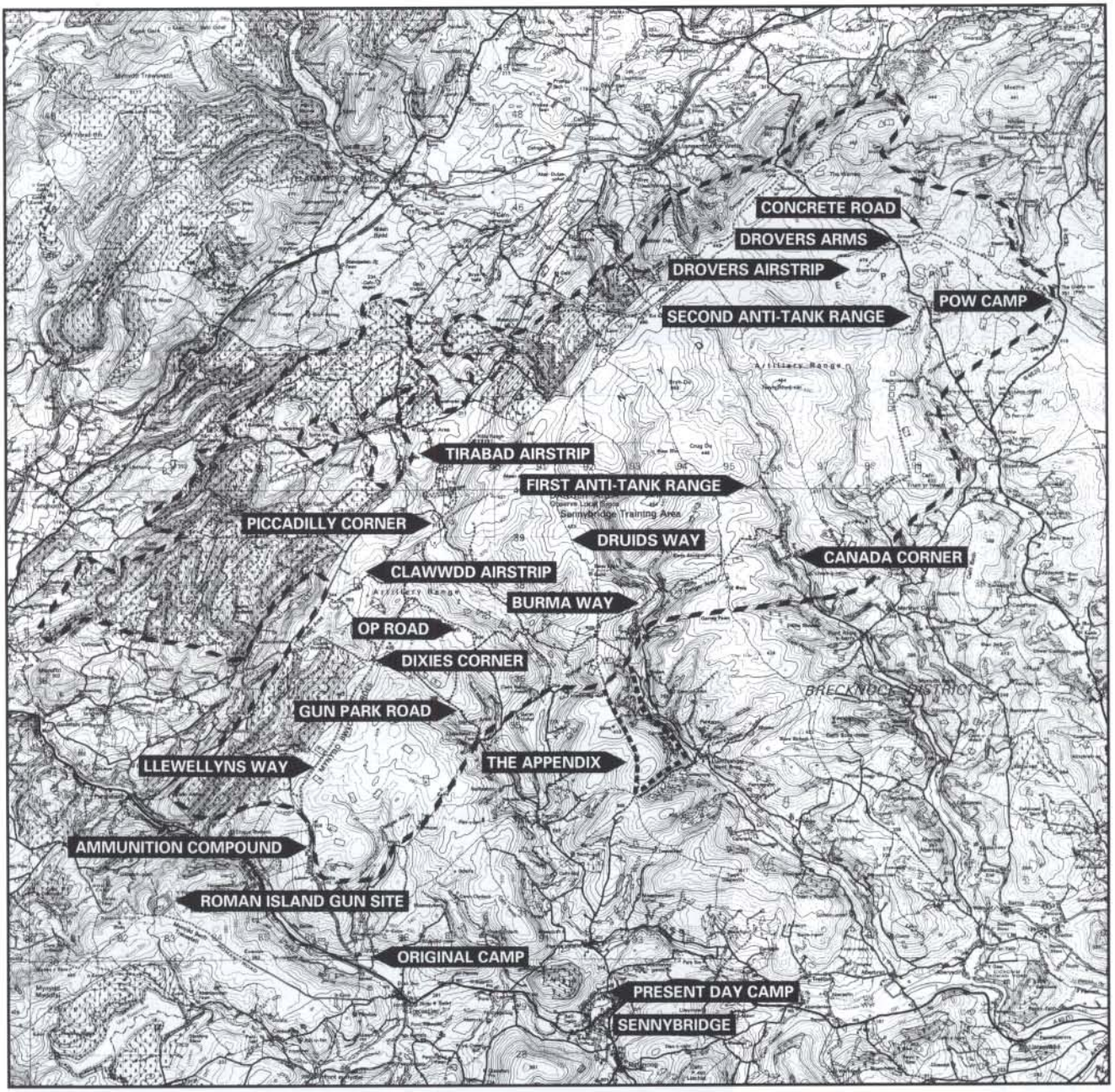


SENNYBRIDGE TRAINING AREA

By Mark Khan

The quality of any army can be measured by the effectiveness of the training for the tasks it may be asked to perform. For the British army in the UK, this vital training has been carried out mostly in military training grounds used specifically for the purpose. One of these, the Sennybridge Training Area, is in mid-Wales, lying partly in the county of Dyfed but mainly in the county of Powys. Sennybridge today is one of the main Army Field Training Centres located throughout the country.

Top: **February 9, 1943. 'Gunners are periodically going through their drill and befitting themselves for the day when they will use their knowledge and weapons against the enemy.' (IWM)**
Above: **The Western Command Artillery Range was established in 1940 at Sennybridge in South Wales and is still in use for army training today. Mark Khan located the spot where this Bofors was live firing on the second anti-tank range which was constructed in 1942, now known as Anti-Tank North.**



The training area lies north of the A40 between Brecon and Llandovery covering approximately 37,000 acres and consists of various types of terrain. A large part of it is upland moor, known as Mynydd Epynt, which ranges in height from 300 to 475 metres. The impact area, comprising approximately 14,000 acres, is located here. The remainder of the modern training area consists of rural farmland and coniferous forest, some of which is leased from the Forestry Commission.

The village of Sennybridge (Pontsenni), where the main camp is situated (and from where it gets its name) lies to the south on the A40 Brecon to Llandovery road.

During the war, many pockets of land were used, primarily as gun positions, in sites that are now outside the boundary, having reverted to civilian usage. Today, although the training area is in constant use, limited public access is possible via a few roads which are clearly signposted (it is not permitted to stop on these roads) provided the range is not in use. Public rights of way also exist at certain times of the year.

This area receives a high rainfall and encounters severe summer and winter weather and the author was often daunted by rain, fog and snow when visiting and trying to match the wartime photographs. The Brecon Beacons National Park lies to the south of the training area and one saying of the permanent staff is: 'If you can see the Brecon Beacons, it's going to rain, and if you can't see them, it IS raining!'

The history of the area goes back to ancient times, as the remains of various tumuli, cairns and fortified farms bear witness, and the Romans settled in Brecon (Aberhonddu) and the surrounding area in the 1st century, A.D. From the Middle Ages, the area has been closely linked with the rearing of sheep and ponies, and a drovers' route crosses the area. Two of the three public houses on or near the training area lie on this route and have not been open since the war, one being ruined (Tafarn-Y-Myndd) and the other (The Drovers' Arms) now used as a troop shelter.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, the requirement for military training grounds increased, and Mynydd Epynt was surveyed with the view to it being used as an artillery range. Requisition orders were issued giving the population until April 30, 1940, to move out (later extended to June 30). When the area was declared clear, a total of 54 dwellings with a population of 219 people had been evacuated.

Although the range boundaries have changed since the war with the purchase by the Ministry of Defence of additional land adjacent to the training area, one particular parcel has been relinquished. Known as the 'Appendix' (due to its shape), this area was located at the southern part of the training area where, during night firing, two powerful searchlights were mounted to illuminate targets on the impact area.

Sennybridge's primary use during the war was as an artillery range. This consisted of fire and movement training for field, medium and heavy regiments of the Allied forces. On May 22, 1940, No. 6 Practice Camp Battery, RA, was formed with two IGs (Instructors Gunnery) and two AIGs (Assistant Instructors Gunnery) from the Gunnery Wing of the School of Artillery (now the Royal School of Artillery). Thus, the RA Practice Camp (the first designation of the training area) began; thereafter many different nationalities used its facilities, including Americans, Canadians and Czechs.

Left: **The first tented accommodation camp was located in this field at Llywel next to the A40; conditions here must have been miserable during the harsh first winter of 1940. (J. A. Jackson)**

The following year, more permanent buildings were erected off Sennybridge village, in what is now called North and South Camps. (Conrad Hughes, Sennybridge AFTC)

The site selected for the initial tented accommodation was at Llywel where a large field next to the A40 was chosen for its easy access to the training area (near the south-western entrance). However, due to its low-lying disposition and proximity to a small river, during the winter of 1939/40 the camp site was flooded, and a decision was made to move to another more suitable location. No traces of the original camp remain today.

The site chosen for the second camp was in the village of Sennybridge itself and it was of typical wartime construction, with single-storey buildings constructed of red brick, timber, and the ubiquitous Nissen huts. It consisted of two parts (North and South Camps) and it is still in a remarkable state of preservation. Two notable changes, however, consist of the removal of all the pot-bellied, cast-iron coke stoves, and the addition of high-security fencing around the perimeter. The camp facilities were (and still are) comprehensive, including a large cinema (The Globe), independent water supply, NAAFI, medical reception centre, numerous messes, and accommodation for up to 2,000 troops.

The road system inherited by the army on the training area was limited to a few rough tracks and paths, so a major road-building scheme was initiated. The initial survey was carried out by No. 808 Company, Royal Engineers, commanded by a Major Llewellyn. In addition to the survey, the company was also responsible for constructing some of the first roads and buildings on the training area.

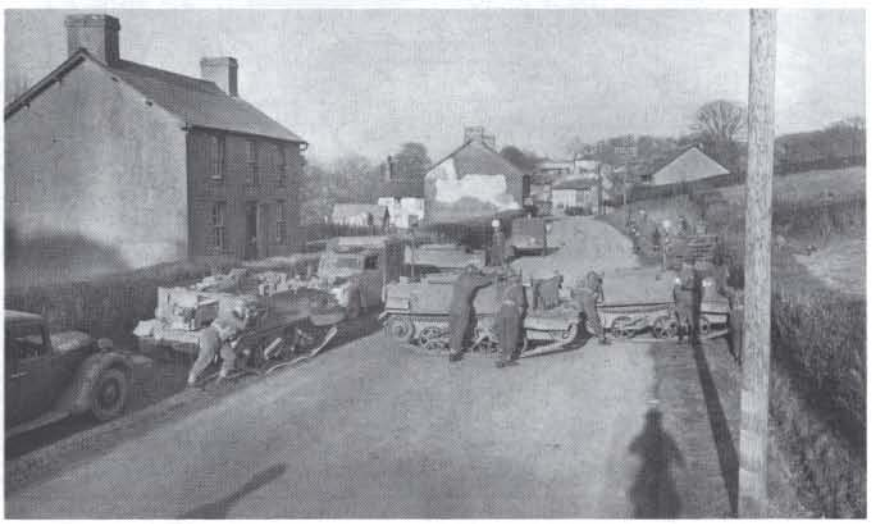
The first road to be built was named Gun Park Road, running from Landeilo R Fan to Llwyd Bwlch Y Groes (known as Dixies Corner), and it was used (as its name suggests) to park the guns overnight to avoid the necessity of transporting them from the camp to the range each day.

Another early development was a section of road running parallel to the existing track, from the A40 at Llywel to the range entrance at the top of the hill to form the 'dual carriageway'. This track was continued into the range itself to meet up with Gun Park Road at Dixies Corner.

Common practice has been to name sections of the road after individuals who instigated or were responsible for their construction. The track known as Llewellyns Way, named after Major Llewellyn of 808 Coy, ran from the south-west entrance, north-eastwards to a point known as Piccadilly Corner. Here, a quarry was established to provide the necessary hardcore, the area reputedly named after Piccadilly Circus, due to the frenetic activity generated by the quarry traffic. From Piccadilly Corner a track was built in a curving north-easterly direction around it, being known as the Gwibedog Road.

To the west of Llewellyns Way, more tracks were created: Gardiners Track and Gardiners Path being named after Lieutenant-Colonel H. Hamilton-Gardiner, MC, RA, the commanding officer from 1942-44. The point where all the tracks ended was understandably called Journey's End.

These roads formed the basis of the early network, and from 1944 onwards, the road development continued, using German and Italian prisoner-of-war labour. A long section of road built at this time was Burma Road (probably named after the original) running in an easterly direction skirting the southern part of the impact area, from its junction with the southern end of Gun Park Road, to a point known as Canada Corner, in the Ysgir Fechan Valley, named after the Canadian artillery units which trained here. On the parapet of a bridge over the Burma Road is an embossed plaque made out of cement, recently discovered during renovation of the bridge stonework, marked 'POW 697 GERMAN'.



Sennybridge itself became involved in exercises like this one by the 31st Division in March 1941. Bren carriers have been manoeuvred to form a road-block in the centre of the High Street. (IWM)

In 1945, the Italians constructed a track linking the Burma Road north-west along the south-west side of the Cilieni Valley to Llewellyns Way, which became known as OP Road, as an observation post existed on the northern end of this track. Another track exists across the impact area named 'Druids Way', running in a north-south direction. The southern end of this track was improved in 1941-42 to provide access for construction of a close-observation post in the central part of the impact area. The Italians were also responsible for building the section of the road on the eastern side of the training area between the B4519 (Garth to Upper Chapel road) at the Drovers' Arms to Cwm Owen on the B4520 Builth Wells–Brecon road. The original construction was of concrete, since when it has always been known as the Concrete Road. The track today has been covered with asphalt, but patches of concrete can still be seen.

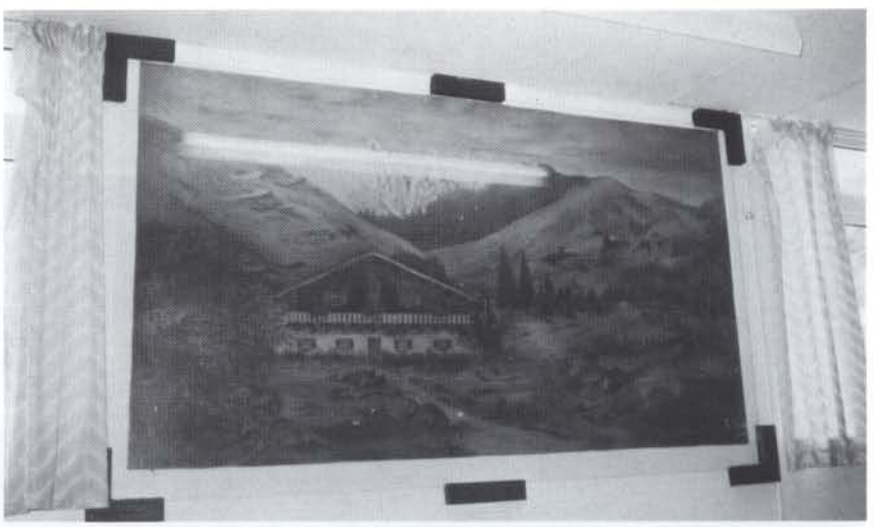
Credit must go to all the wartime builders as most of the work done during the war is still remarkably intact today, even after many years exposure to the severe Epynt climate. Today, all the wartime tracks are still in constant use and have since been upgraded. Nearly all follow their original courses apart from Llewellyns Way and the Gwibedog Road which have been re-routed slightly. Although most of these wartime tracks lie within the restricted access zones of the training area, it is possible to travel along Llewellyns Way to Piccadilly Corner past Journey's End (now a complex of small-arms ranges) and join the public road to the village of Tirabad (Llandulas) on most days of the year. Movement along the Garth–Upper Chapel road on the eastern side of the training area is also possible, although delays can sometimes occur when live firing is taking place on the anti-tank range.

A small, single-width bridge was constructed of stone blocks and concrete over a stream called Nant Eithrim in the south of the area in 1941. Its purpose is obscure as it did not connect any tracks existing at that time; today, this bridge is reached by a recently constructed track (Route 60).

The German PoW company used in some of the construction was No. 697, and the Italian No. 573, both part of No. 29 Pioneer Corps Group whose headquarters were in Abergavenny. A small camp was constructed at Cwm Owen near the Griffin Inn on the B4520 Brecon to Builth Wells road. The remains of this camp can still be seen today but only the hut bases remain, the buildings having been demolished at some time during the 1960s. At the same site, the prisoners constructed a small dam in the valley above to provide a water supply. On the walls of one of the other ranks' messes in the main camp, unknown PoW artists have painted murals of scenes from their home countries (mostly alpine scenes) and these are protected today behind Macrilon screens. Other evidence of the prisoners' work can be seen in various inscriptions. Two exist on culverts running under the Burma Road in between D Range (FFA) and the newer anti-tank facility, are marked '573I POW' and '1944' respectively. Another exists on OP road and is marked '573 POW' and the fourth can be found at the site of the Tirabad vedette on the road between Tirabad and Penlanwen. This is marked '1945' and 'PO' (the 'W' is missing). A bridge on Gun Park Road also has a marked concrete parapet.

Many of the old wartime roads, built for access to the various ranges, can still be seen. This picture shows an original part of Llywellyns Way which was later re-routed slightly.

Prisoners-of-war were used to upgrade the facilities and in several places they have left their mark. *Left:* **German prisoners of PoW Company No. 697 on the bridge over Burma Road near X Range and** *(right)* **Italian handiwork on a culvert on OP Road to record that it was constructed by PoW Company No. 573, both units part of No. 29 Pioneer Corps Group.**



Murals painted by prisoners in one of the other ranks' messes in the main camp have now been preserved.

The first anti-tank range was here in the Ysgir Fechan valley, and was used from 1940 to 1942 when a second range was established to cater for the more-powerful weapons then coming into service.

A vital part of soldiers' training (then as now) is the use of anti-tank weapons. During the war, these consisted of anti-tank guns or smaller weapons such as the PIAT. Live firing practice using these weapons requires the provision of both static and moving targets, and the anti-tank ranges at Sennybridge followed the rapid evolution of these weapons.

The first anti-tank range was established in 1941 in the Ysgir Fechan valley on the south of the range. This consisted of several target runs, and utilised three of the existing evacuated farms where blockhouses were constructed of original stone and reinforced concrete. These blockhouses were used to house the winding gear and engines for the moving target facilities. The remains of several pulleys and the associated target runs can still be seen even after 50 years. Major improvements to the tracks on this range have altered the lie of the land, as it is now a live firing area, and have obliterated some of the earlier traces. At the far end of the valley are the remains of two of the original farms (Rhyd-Y-Maen and Car) which are now ruined.

The winch houses, which operated the pulley system to move targets across the range, still stand.

Mark's comparison shows the new road known simply as Car Track which now runs up the valley.

The second wartime anti-tank range, consisted of two parallel runs, one running uphill *(left)*, the other straight along the valley floor.

When the early anti-tank weapons were superseded by more powerful guns (the 6-pdr and 17-pdr), a second anti-tank range was established in 1942. The range hut, of mixed rough stone and brick construction and surrounded by a thick earth bank on three sides, was located on the site of Lawr-Y-Dolau farm, of which no trace now exists. Originally, two AEC Matador diesel engines resided here, being used to drive the moving target machinery. One of the target runs proceeded diagonally up the hill from the range hut and consisted of a narrow-gauge railway track laid on wooden and metal sleepers protected by earth banks. The second run, incorporating a concrete bridge over the River Honddu, also started at the hut and ran parallel to the first run, but in this case along the valley floor. These moving targets runs have been disused since the mid-1970s and have consequently fallen into disrepair. The tracks, however, are mainly intact and the target carriages lie abandoned at various points on the runs. Static target butts are positioned on the hill between the two runs.

The anti-tank facility is still in use on this range today, albeit now provided by static targets. Until recently, these consisted of the remains of a Sherman and a Comet tank, but these have now been scrapped. A section of steel plate from an unknown warship is also used as a target. The butts are penned off as they may contain unexploded HEAT (High Explosive Anti-Tank) rounds which contain sensitive fuzes and may detonate if touched. Also littered around are the remains of many other types of spent projectiles.

Today, static targets are used and, until recently, several types were still of World War II vintage. This shot-up US Amtrac (or Buffalo) *(above)* and Churchill *(below)* were both pictured on part of another disused anti-tank range. Present-day visitors to the range should note that due to the location of the firing points on the other side of the valley, which necessitates firing across the B4519 road, when firing takes place, access along the road is delayed for up to 15 minutes.

Buildings on the Sennybridge ranges have mixed fortunes. *Left:* **This pile of rubble is all that remains of Derw Fawr farmhouse where the first wartime telephone exchange for the range was located.** *Right:* **The Drover's Arms, once the local inn, was extended and restored in 1995 and is currently used as a troop shelter. (Mrs M. Bell-Jack)**

Gun positions were dotted around the whole range during the war, outside the impact area. Two were located to the south-east, between the Usk reservoir and the A40. One, known as Roman Island Gun Site, is still being used for training today (although no longer as a gun position). In the late 1970s, trials were held here to test whether the 155mm FH70 gun could be fired from such a location but these had to be abandoned due to noise constraints. Much of this site has now been sold off to private ownership, but the MoD retains a small area used for dry training only. Another larger location was used just south-east of the Roman Island Gun Site, where heavier-calibre artillery (7.2-in howitzers) was fired at ranges of 18,000–20,000 yards during the war.

To ensure safety on any range, a communications network is essential. The method of communication is via field telephones with 'tapping-in' points provided at firing positions and observation points throughout the range. The wartime telephones were connected by overhead lines supported on telegraph poles which remained in use until 1963 when the cables were placed underground.

The first range telephone exchange was located at Derw Fawr farm near the village of Landeilo R Fan. This lies just inside the training area boundary. The exchange was established in the drawing room of the farmhouse, but a pile of broken up concrete and stones is all that remains. Some wartime concrete hardstandings can be seen, although their purpose is unknown, as well as some of the telegraph poles.

Dixies Corner is located in the south-west corner of the training area and is probably one of the best-known features of the range. The name is said to derive from an individual called 'Dixie', a sapper of 808 Coy who was reputed to have had charge of a small workmen's hut at the junction of Gun Park Road and Llewellyns Way. Dixie was always 'in the know'.

The range exchange facilities moved here in 1942, consisting of a small brick and concrete building with barred windows. A Romney hut was originally used by the range engineers, but this has since been re-clad and improvements made to the exterior by adding a brick wall and tarmacadam surround. The shed is also now used as a troop shelter and store. The range officer's hut is of timber-framed construction with corrugated iron cladding and originally featured shuttered prop-up windows. This building was until relatively recently in an original state complete with desk and telephone but today it is used as a troop shelter.

Provision was required on the training area to allow the operation of light air observation and liaison aircraft, which provided the ability to allow adjustment of fire and spotting of targets from the air. Clawwdd airstrip is one of the three wartime airstrips and is located on the south-western side of the training area. A Nissen hut is an original wartime feature which has been re-clad, having the original brick exterior end walls faced internally with breeze blocks. It originally had a fireplace, but this has since been removed and bricked up. The landing strip here runs for approximately 350 yards in a north–south direction, with whitewashed markers set into the ground to mark the outline.

Tirabad airstrip was situated on a small plateau but no obvious traces remain today. The Drover's Arms strip lay on top of Drum Dhu, north of the Drover's Arms. It was levelled out from the top of the hill and ran in an east–west direction and, although not used for many years, it can still be easily made out. In the run-up to the invasion, the US forces set up many improvised airstrips around the UK to operate their light liaison and spotter aircraft (see *After the Battle* No. 73). These units belonged to the artillery units of the US Army, and one such strip was set up half a mile to the west of Sennybridge village beside the River Usk and used by numerous units firing on the range.

When artillery is live firing, it is directed by Observation Post crews, who are responsible for adjusting the fire of the guns onto the target. The observation posts (OPs) were allocated a number (i.e. OP21) and sited around the perimeter of the impact area in positions allowing good views of targets being fired on. None of the early OPs (with the exception of the Close Observation OP) were of permanent construction, most providing rudimentary shelter only. Many of the current OPs are still sited on original wartime locations, although they have subsequently been re-numbered.

A close-observation OP was constructed deep in the impact area near the site of Blaen Talar farm. This allowed parts of the inner impact area to be observed at close range and to allow OP crews to become fully cognisant of the effects of close artillery fire. This OP is reached from Druids Way. A fenced track once existed to the OP but this has now mostly disappeared, although parts of it can still be seen in places. This OP is of solid concrete construction, forming a long low building partly underground. Narrow windows allow observation of targets, and an earth bank at the rear and over the concrete roof provides protection. It is no longer in use and has received a direct hit on the very top which has blown approximately a foot off the top structure approximately five feet across.

One structure built to withstand the test of time is this forward observation post near the ruins of Blaen Talar farm. Looking very much like a First World War bunker, 'Bomblast OP' has the scars of at least one direct hit on its roof. The interior is dark and dank and, when visited by the author, empty apart from a discarded and rusty tin of compo beans and the remains of a dead sheep.

Another observation post, and a unique relic of the Second World War, was discovered by Mark by chance when he recognised this Bedford QL as the former OP dubbed the 'Tea House of the August Moon'.

Whilst visiting the range to attempt to match some of the wartime photos near the modern-day grenade range, my guide noticed the remains of an old vehicle about 1,000 yards away. On inspection, it was found to be the remains of a frame-bodied Bedford QL lorry. This turned out to be one of the original OPs — nicknamed the 'Tea House of the August Moon' as it was an ex-NAAFI tea wagon. This vehicle, although in poor condition, can easily be matched to a photo of it which exists on one of the OP panoramas drawn by Lieutenant-Colonel Mike King, the range officer in 1955.

The original wartime ammunition compound lies near the south-western entrance to the training area on the Llywel–Tirabad road, just off the original course of Llywellyns Way. The artillery ammunition stored here during the war would have been delivered by railway via Sennybridge station. A hardcore track leads off part of the original Lywellyns Way to the remains of the compound. The tumbledown ruins of two small Nissen huts are sited at either end of the entry track, although a number of huts are known to have existed here. The remains of the visible huts have fallen down now, but are easy to identify. On the day I visited this site, I noticed a pile of rubbish — mostly barbed wire and the remains of artillery containers. However, raking around I found a fuze blanking off plate for a 5.5-in shell dated 1942, some brass fuze covers and an American fuze plug/lifting ring.

Sennybridge railway station was part of the Great Western Line and originally ran from Swansea until it was axed under the Beeching cuts. The station would have been the arrival point for troops and equipment using the ranges during the war. The original station building is intact and now used as an agricultural wholesalers.

At certain points around the range, boundary vedettes (small huts) were constructed and manned to control and restrict unauthorised access to the range. These buildings vary in design, but are generally of brick construction with concrete roofs and small windows. Most have small concrete seats and some have fireplaces. They were connected to the range exchange by telephone.

As military vehicles become superseded by new ones, some inevitably end up as targets on military ranges. Sennybridge has its fair share and they represent a good cross-section of vehicles used by the British Army. Civilian vehicles are also used as targets and the remains of some that are considered 'classics' can still be found. Many are painted in garish 'high visibility' colours to allow easier observation when under fire. Interesting examples consist of Daimler armoured cars; an M40 SP gun (Kilo tank); an M44 SP gun near Kilo tank; a Churchill tank on the old R/L range; and a Buffalo (now scrapped); a Commer HQ van; and Valentine tanks.

When construction of the FIBUA (Fighting In Built Up Areas) village was commenced on the edge of the south-western impact area in 1988, two Daimler armoured car targets needed to be moved. These vehicles, due to their location at the edge of the impact area, had received relatively few hits and both were nearly brand new, having virtually no mileage. Indeed, one still had its engine wrapped in greased paper! These vehicles have now been moved into the care of the Friends of Bovington Tank Museum. Other more recent types — Ferrets, Saracen, Saladin, Bedfords, AFV 432s, and a Chieftain — are in evidence, as well as three privately supplied T54/55 tanks. The author had the opportunity to help in an attempt to get one of these running and at the same time test his upper body strength (found sadly wanting) by manually traversing the turret to gain access to the engine deck plates!

On the south-west side of the impact area, near the FIBUA village, approximately 200 yards from the track called Druids Way, are the remains of the hulls of a number of Valentine tanks, which were recently cannibalised for parts by the Bovington Tank Museum. They were placed here in 1942 and used as targets by rocket-firing Typhoons, sustaining many hits which have substantially reduced their restorability! Also dotted around the range are a number of wartime trucks; numerous and variable in type but most have now succumbed to the ravages of time and direct hits.

The author would like to express his gratitude to the staff of the Sennybridge Army Field Training Centre, with special thanks to: Mr Jonathon Jackson, Conservation Secretary; Major A. L. Jackson (TIG) RA, Range Liason Officer; Captain (Rtd) Ron Church MBE, and Lieutenant-Colonel J.P.R. Hayes, RE, for their help in the preparation of this article.

Although, as Mark explains, parts of the range are open to the public, this pile of rusty shells recovered by 22 Engineer Regiment is a grim reminder of the hazards left over from five decades of live firing. Due to expansion of some of the existing range facilities, much work has been done by the regiment to clear unexploded ordnance prior to contractors moving in to start work. This has unearthed projectiles of many varied types, one example even being an unfired 8-inch howitzer round dated 1918!

HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
UNITED STATES ARMY.

CONFIDENTIAL

In the foregoing case of:

Private DAVID COBB (34165248)
Company C,827th Engineer Battalion
(Aviation).

the sentence is confirmed and will be carried into execution on Friday, 12 March 1943, at DISCIPLINARY TRAINING CENTER, NO. 1, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, England. The act of execution will be under the direction of the Commanding Officer of DISCIPLINARY TRAINING CENTER, NO. 1.

(ETO 255).

Sgd F. M. Andrews
Lieutenant-General
United States Army
Commanding.

1 March ~~February~~, 1943.

US MILITARY EXECUTIONS

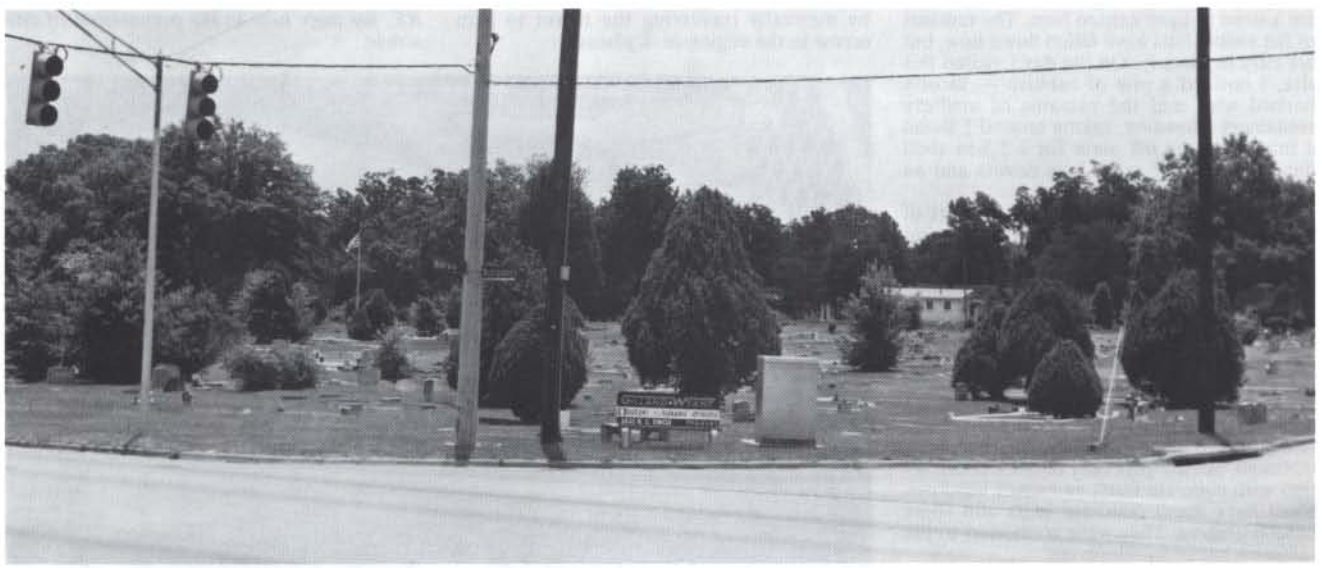
By Professor J. Robert Lilly

The article in *After the Battle* No. 59 (1988) entitled 'The US Prison at Shepton Mallet', provided a rare perspective on military justice in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) during WWII. It examined the cases of American soldiers who were charged, tried, and sentenced to die while stationed in England and Ireland. Ultimately, it was there that they were executed for their crimes against fellow US servicemen and civilian locals of host communities where, ironically, they were commonly (pre)-judged as 'oversexed, overpaid, overfed and over here'.

These executions present a fascinating topic that has been overlooked by WWII historians. The stories and events that account for them have thus far received too little attention as mainstream historical interests, especially those celebrating the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII, tend primarily to focus on the diplomacy, battle strategies, and heroes and villains of the war itself. Although it is unfortunate that this subject has been slighted in the past, including this year of often anguished re-examination of WWII, through my research I have found startling new information that raises questions and concerns that merit prompt attention. To ignore them would contribute to an ostensible failure to confront some very enigmatic questions about US military justice during the 'Good War'.

The research that I share here is part of the answer to these perplexing questions: who were the GIs who were tried, convicted and executed and what exactly were their crimes? This is a major focus of my on-going research in large part because black soldiers represented almost 80 per cent of the total of 70 men executed in the ETO. This is astounding when one considers that they only comprised 10 per cent of the total US troops in Europe during the war. I also intend to share some recent findings about what may have happened to the bodies of the executed soldiers. This information may possibly necessitate an inquiry into who, indeed, is buried in the cemetery for the dishonoured located at the US military cemetery at Oise-Aisne, France.

In England, there were a total of 18 US soldiers executed, not 19 as reported in *After the Battle* No. 59. One explanation for the discrepancy is that a Private Thomas Bell, who was reported as having been executed during the war, was actually still imprisoned in an Atlanta, Georgia, federal penitentiary



For the past 5 years, Professor J. Robert Lilly, Adjunct Professor of Law at the Salmon P. Chase College of Law, Professor of Sociology, Sociology Department at the University of Northern Kentucky, and visiting professor at the University of Durham, has been studying capital crimes committed by US servicemen during the Second World War. His research for this article is part of the material to be used for *Selective Death: The Execution of US Soldiers, WWII*, currently under preparation (and must not be quoted without written consent of Professor Lilly). In issue 59, we visited the scenes of those crimes committed in the UK which ended in the death penalty for the perpetrator. We had then understood that the bodies of those executed were all transferred after the war to the 'dishonoured' plot established at Oise-Aisne cemetery. The American Battle Monuments Commission refused to allow us to visit the plot, or provide a listing of the graves (which are simply numbered), but Professor Lilly has now discovered that the body of the first American to be executed in Shepton Mallet prison — a black soldier, Private David Cobb, convicted of shooting his white officer — had in fact never been transferred to Oise-Aisne, but had been left at Brookwood in the UK, and had been allowed to be repatriated direct to the United States in 1949. Cobb's body was buried in North Highland Street Cemetery *(above)*, in his home town of Dothan, Alabama.

for rape conviction as late as the early 1950s. (See also *After the Battle* No. 80.) Rape was only one of several capital charges that resulted in death sentences for American soldiers. Other charges included murder, murder/rape, sodomy and desertion.

With the possible exception of the case of Eddie Slovik who was executed in France for desertion (see *After the Battle* No. 32), very little has been published about ETO executions. However, rich sources of information are available in surviving trial transcripts and letters. Additionally, from interviews with surviving family members and acquaintances, I have begun to learn about the particular histories and personalities of the men executed.

I begin this chronicle quite modestly with an account of the first American soldier executed in the ETO during WWII. He was Private David Cobb who was a 21-year-old black man from Dothan, Alabama. The official records indicate that while on guard duty he shot to death his white Officer of the Day, 2nd Lieutenant Robert J. Cobner. In this report, I use the execution of Private Cobb as an introductory case study with which to initiate a framework for discussing some important notions of 'justice' as they are implicated in the procedures of the military justice system of WWII.

Nearby, lies the Cobb family grave of his father, the Revd. Howard C. Cobb, who died in 1965, and his mother, Addie Mae, who passed away in 1988.

PRIVATE DAVID COBB

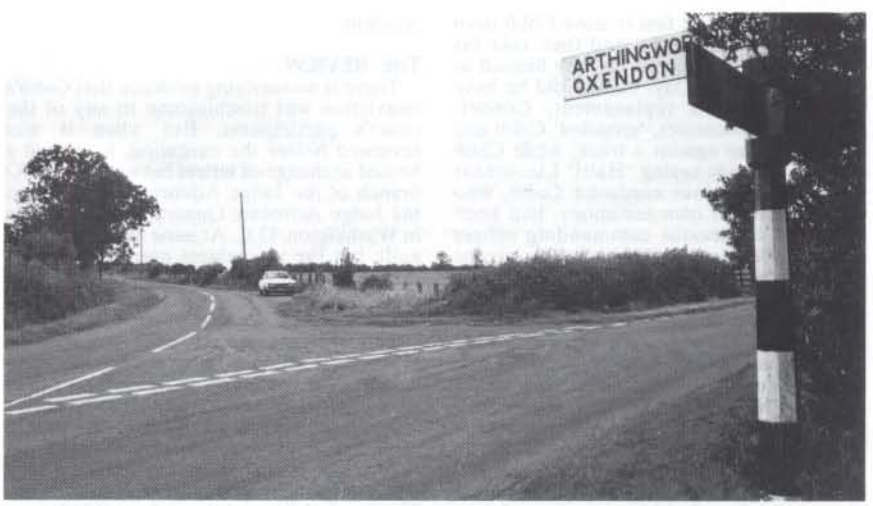
I have recently been successful at tracking down some personal information about Private Cobb. According to his only brother Richard, who was himself a Second World War Third Army volunteer infantrymen, David was '. . . wayward and mischievous'. David was the second son of the mild-mannered and upwardly mobile Revd. Howard Cobb and his devoted wife Addie Mae. He is remembered for his inclination to drink beer and his fondness for playing pool, although much to the consternation of his parents. Richard, his older brother, often took care of David, particularly on Saturday nights after he had drunk 'too many beers and got in his last shot [of pool]'. It was Richard who made sure that David always made it safely home.

As Richard and David grew older, Revd. Cobb gave them an ultimatum: go to school or go to work! Richard continued with school and enrolled in the famous Tuskegee Institute before he entered the service. David opted for the latter choice. While in either the 7th or 8th grade he dropped out of the segregated school both he and Richard attended to work as a driver on a paper delivery truck. He also continued his habit of nighttime imbibing, and on some mornings after a night of drinking, it was brother Richard who came again to the rescue and made the delivery rounds at David's request.

In 1938, at the age of 17, David married a young local woman from a respected family. Her name was Cornelia Dozier. They lived with the Revd. and Mrs. Cobb and Cornelia gave birth to two children, Howard and Christine. After some marital difficulties, David and Cornelia parted ways. She took their children and went to live with her parents. However, the children preferred the home of their paternal grandparents and spent much of their time with David's parents. Today, David's son divides his time between Dothan, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia. When in Dothan he lives only a few streets from where he and Christine lived with David's parents. Howard is recently retired and Christine works in a shirt factory and takes care of her ill husband, a military career retiree. She too lives just a few blocks from her grandparents home and 'Baptist Bottom' where Revd. Cobb preached and on Sundays she attends one of the three churches organised by her father's ministry.

Inducted as a volunteer on January 8, 1942, David departed the US from Fort Dix, New Jersey, on December 5 that year and arrived in England on the 16th. Before leaving he had been assigned to a new unit, Company C, 827th Engineers. The crime of which David was accused was committed on Sunday, December 27, 1942, just eleven days after his arrival in the UK. His trial was held ten days later on January 6, 1943.

Upon learning about 'David's troubles,' his father and mother wrote letters to President Roosevelt requesting that he grant clemency to their son. Additionally, Cornelia, who had moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, since the failure of her marriage to David, tried to intervene as well. She enlisted the help of the president of the Community Social Club No. 47 at 2140 Ridge Avenue, and the Revd. John R. Curtis of 2634 Diamond Street. All of their efforts were unsuccessful resulting only in explanations and regrets from Colonel Ralph Pulsifer, Judge Advocate General. 'Mother' Cobb's letter was answered by Lieutenant General Frank M. Andrews, the ETO commander, two months to the day after David was found guilty and condemned to death.



Private Cobb had arrived at the 827th Engineer Battalion (Aviation) ordnance depot at Desborough, Northamptonshire, on December 16, 1942. The guardhouse lay just beside the white motor car parked on the road to Arthingworth (see the scene of crime plan in issue 59). On December 27, Corporal William Mason, Jr., was Sergeant of the Guard and had placed Private Cobb at a stationary post at the guardhouse.

A General Court-Martial was held in the Court of Quarter Sessions in the Guildhall in Cambridge. Now the Crown Court, this courtroom was frequently used during the war by the US Advocate General for the trial of American servicemen, whereupon it temporarily became an extension of United States territory. The testimony given at Cobb's court-martial held on January 6, 1943 stated that at between 1000 and 1100 hours on the 27th, 2nd Lieutenant Robert J. Cobner came to the guardhouse to have some beds moved and to have the premises policed. Private Cobb told him that he was not going to stand post any longer because he had been on duty for another four hours. While talking to Lieutenant Cobner, Private Cobb was carrying his rifle across his shoulder in an improper manner. Lieutenant Cobner told Cobb to act like a soldier, and to stand at attention while addressing an officer. Cobb replied that he did not care as he had been restricted for six months. Lieutenant Cobner called a guard to arrest Cobb, but when the guard walked towards Cobb, the accused brought his gun down to his waist, pointed it at the guard and halted him. The Sergeant of the Guard was then directed by Lieutenant Cobner to arrest Cobb, who pointed the gun at him and ordered him to halt. Private Cobb said that he would not give his gun to anyone until he was properly relieved. When the Sergeant of the Guard failed to take the piece, Lieutenant Cobner started towards Cobb to take the gun, and when within two or three steps, Cobb shot him. Lieutenant Cobner fell to the ground and death was almost instantaneous due to the fact that the bullet penetrated the heart.

THE TRIAL

There are several disturbing and questionable aspects to Private Cobb's trial, all of which at this date suggest it was a hastily constructed one-day event with an inappropriate and tragic result. While there is no doubt Cobb shot Lieutenant Cobner, there is considerable evidence which indicates that he believed he was acting appropriately according to his training. Cobb had already been on guard duty from midnight until 0530 hours and, after serving a further four hours, he asked Cobner if he could be relieved. Lieutenant Cobner said he could not do anything for him, and he berated Cobb for his appearance and he ordered Cobb to shape up. The Lieutenant did not like Cobb's response and ordered him to give him his rifle. Cobb testified that he had been taught that to be relieved from guard duty required a specific procedure, which Lieutenant Cobner was not following. Lieutenant Cobner, for instance, did not first remove Cobb from his post to his barracks, and then take his weapon. Nor did Cobner identify himself as the Officer of the Day, neither did he have with him Cobb's replacement. Cobner, according to witnesses, 'crowded' Cobb and backed him up against a truck, while Cobb continually kept saying 'Halt!' Lieutenant Cobner's behaviour confused Cobb, who according to his own testimony, had been taught by a previous commanding officer that while on guard duty not to allow anyone within five paces of his gun.

Cobb also testified that he had been trained with a bolt-action Springfield rifle, and did not know how to handle the M1 [Garand semi-automatic rifle] given to him for guard duty. In fact, he testified that he did not know how to load the rifle, a task completed by another trooper in his barracks. The previous day he had been a truck driver.

The defence attorney, a captain, did very little to help Cobb. He did not develop a 'theory of defence' which might have elaborated or demonstrated that Cobb's testimony had merit. On two occasions during the one-day trial, the defence attorney referred to the shooting as an 'accident,' a term suggesting an occurrence far less serious that one meriting a death sentence. Yet he never developed this point even though this description was not challenged by the prosecution. Nor did defence act aggressively when given the opportunity to take advantage of evidence presented by the prosecution. Several prosecution witnesses concurred with Cobb that they also did not know that Cobner was an officer of the day. Again, the defence was silent.

Six days after the conviction, Cobb's attorney, however, did write to the Commanding General a letter requesting that a plea of clemency be considered. In it, he reasoned that Cobb believed that he was fulfilling his duty as a guard by not relinquishing his rifle until he was properly relieved. The strength of his conviction, according to Cobb's attorney, was demonstrated by the fact that Cobb continued 'walking his post after the fateful accident'. He did so for another 15 minutes after the accident.

THE REVIEW

There is no surviving evidence that Cobb's conviction was troublesome to any of the court's participants. But when it was reviewed before the execution, it created a heated exchange of letters between the ETO branch of the Judge Advocate General and the Judge Advocate General's headquarters in Washington, D.C. At issue was not Cobb's guilt, but the procedures used for assuring that the review process before the final sentence was was indeed independent of 'command influence'.

This was not a new issue for the US military. It was the subject of a long and detailed US Congressional Hearing in 1919 after bitter complaints about military justice following WWI. At the heart of the debate was whether a military court of review could render fair decisions when in fact its very own commander had requested the review. The fear in 1919, and throughout WWII, was that 'independent' decisions would be sacrificed for career concerns. No career military personnel, it has been often said, would be so stupid as to give his commander the 'wrong' answer.

THE EXECUTION

Eight days before the execution, Cobb was informed in the company of five witnesses that the order for his death had been approved. The next day, March 5, 1943, the JAG's office outlined the rituals of Cobb's execution in two pages of instructions containing five separate procedures. The first addressed 'Preliminary Arrangements', including the opportunity for Cobb to have 'consolation and ministration' of the chaplain or clergy of his choice. Two days later, the instructions were modified and extended.

The procession from Cobb's cell to the death chamber required the military to lead and religion to accompany. Shepton Mallet's Commandant, Lieutenant Colonel T. W. Gillard, took the lead with Captain J. O'Brien, chaplain, on his left. In addition to Cobb, 21 people were present including 12 commissioned officers, six non-commissioned officers, one private and two civilians. Thirteen of the 21 were witnesses. No more than five witnesses were required so one wonders if this, the first execution in the European Theater, had some of the characteristics of a spectacle.

To the surprise of many capital punishment experts today, most of the US military executions were by hanging, not shooting. While the specific reasons for this arrangement have not been determined, informed sources claim that the sound of rifle shots coming from within the walls of Shepton Mallet prison would have been most disturbing to local residents. For Cobb, the US Army hired England's official hangman, Thomas W. Pierrepoint and his nephew Albert. What can be reported here for the first time is that contrary to several past reports, Albert Pierrepoint did not execute all or even the bulk of the 18 soldiers. His personal execution ledger, made available for examination during June 1995, reveals he participated in only six US military executions at Shepton Mallet.

After Cobb spoke his last words to the chaplain, 'Just pray for my soul as I asked before', he was executed at 0103 hours. He was left hanging until 0208 when he was declared dead by three medical officers.

On March 22, 1943, Cobb's mother sent a telegram to the Judge Advocate General in Britain appealing for her son's body. In September 1948, his widow, Cornelia, also requested its return and it arrived at Hawk's Funeral Home in Dothan in April 1949.

AUTOPSY AND BURIAL

Cobb was transported by US Graves Registration personnel to Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey. There, on the day of his death, for reason still unknown, and in compliance with the modified and extended execution rituals, he was autopsied beginning at 0830 hours by Lieutenant Colonel John B. Hazard, MD, a Harvard University graduate.

Contrary to the account in *After the Battle* No. 59 which reported that after the war all of the dishonoured soldiers were collected and interred in Plot E at Oise-Aisne, France, Cobb never made this journey. Grave registration records indicate that his mother requested his body by telegram on March 22, 1943, just ten days after his death, but it was, in fact, his wife's request as 'next of kin' which led to his remains being repatriated from Brookwood. He was returned to the US on March 31, 1949 in a padlocked casket and received for burial by the Hawk's Funeral Home in Dothan, Alabama. The burial itself was, according to his daughter who was aged ten at the time, attended by two white soldiers bearing rifles. David Cobb now rests in an unmarked grave next to his sister, Ruby Lee, who died in 1948. The grave is not far from that of their parents in the city-owned North Highland Street Cemetery.

The fact that Cobb was never buried in Oise-Aisne raises some very touchy questions about just how those in Plot E died and who is buried there. Several sources including the American Battle Monuments Commission, maintain that Plot E contains 96 graves in four rows of 24. And according to Huie's famous book *The Execution of Private Slovik* (1954) all 96 dead are from the ETO. Yet, WWII military reports state that only 70 men were executed in the ETO. The discrepancy of 26 has puzzled some WWII historians and capital punishment specialists for the last 50 years. One explanation for the discrepancy claimed that the 26 graves contained soldiers summarily shot in the field of battle without benefit of a trial. Another theory speculated that the 26 were soldiers sentenced to die but who had either died from natural causes, committed suicide or were murdered while awaiting execution.

Research into this question earlier this year by the author solved the mystery. With a list of the burials in Plot E supplied by the American Battle Monuments Commission, (provided as far as I know for the first time to a civilian), and a list of WWII executions from the Office of the Clerk of Court, United States Army Judiciary, I learned that the 26 graves actually contained soldiers executed in the Mediterranean and North African Theaters of Operations. It was the fact that Cobb's name did not appear on the Commission's Plot E list that triggered my investigation into where he had been buried. As is the nature of historical research, this discovery raises further intriguing questions about the final disposal of the ETO's dishonoured soldiers. The Commission's list includes the name of at least one soldier as still being buried in Plot E when in fact he is buried in the United States (see also *After the Battle* No. 72, page 44).

SUMMARY

The examination of Private David Cobb's crime and death leaves several unanswered questions. Was he a cold-blooded killer who deserved to die, or was his execution a tool used to reaffirm some military value? No evidence was presented which would give the slightest support that Cobb was a dangerous killer. But in the words of Brigadier General L. H. Hendrick, JAG, ETO: 'As much as one must always regret the need for the imposition of the death penalty, to commute the judgment of the court in this case I fear would seriously jeopardise discipline'. Cobb's death, it appears, was as much because of the Army's fears of future discipline problems as for killing Lieutenant Cobner.

Whether those who followed Cobb fared any better with the processes of military justice in the ETO is, to some extent, a moot point. But this much seems certain: as far as is known at this juncture, no Regular Army soldier was executed in the ETO, only draftees or men who had enlisted for the duration of the war. And as we know, most of the executed soldiers were black.

Specially for this feature, Cobb's son, Howard, and daughter, Christine, visit their father's unmarked grave in North Highland Street Cemetery.

ROBERT J. COBNER
2 LT 827 ENGR BN
PENNSYLVANIA DEC 27 1942